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THE Church of Rome NO GUIDE IN Matters of Faith:

In Anſwer to a late Letter from a *Nephew* to his *Unkle*,

Containing

The Reaſons why he became a *Roman Catholick*, and why He Now declines any further *Diſputes*, or Conteſts, about Matters of RELIGION.

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THE Church of ROME NO GUIDE IN *Matters of FAITH.*

SIR,

WHEN You were pleas'd to communicate to Me the *Letter*, which I now return to You; and to acquaint Me that great numbers of them had been put into the hands of thoſe of our Religion, and into your Own among the reſt: I preſently underſtood your meaning to be, That I ſhould ſend you my Reflections upon it. I have obey'd your Commands, and brought them into as ſhort a compaſs as I could: And ſhall only crave Leave, before you paſs on to them, to add a few previous Conſiderations, which I could not ſo well diſpoſe of in my Animadverſions upon the *Letter*, yet do not think it proper altogether to omit.

And firſt of all; I muſt own my ſelf at a loſs to conceive what the Gentlmen of the *Roman*

Church mean, to begin a new Attacque, at this time of day, upon Us. They cannot but remember what little Succeſs They had in theſe ſort of Encounters, under a Prince who not only openly abetted their Religion, but made uſe of all that Authority he then enjoy'd, to diſcourage Us from making a Reply to them. And ſurely they ought not to think either our Cauſe to be worſe, or our Courage to be leſs now, than they found them both to be in thoſe days.

That they have not much improved their Reaſoning, ſince that time, the preſent *Letter* ſufficiently ſhews: Which, as it has nothing in it but a confus'd heap of the old, exploded, and even ridiculous Pretenſions, in favour of their Church; ſo were not their Confidence as invincible, as their Cauſe is deſperate, they would be aſham'd to appear again in publick, in defence of ſuch Priviledges, for which they have been ſo often, and evidently convinced; there is neither any Foundation in *Reaſon*, nor any Authority in *Holy Scripture*.

But it may be they flatter themſelves, That we ſhall be leſs vigilant, and active, againſt them now, than we were heretofore; and by our Negligence, or Security, give them that Advantage under a *Proteſtant Prince*, which they in vain hoped for under a *Popiſh* one. If this be their Hope, I ſhall only ſay, That I verily rily believe they will here again find that they were miſtaken. We ſhall make it our Endeavour to provide, that the *Church* of *England* do not ſuffer by their Arguments: And we doubt not but that your ſelf, and the reſt of thoſe Worthies, who have already appear'd ſo zealous in defence of the Religion, and Liberties of the Na-

Nation; will continue ſtill to take care, that it be not endanger'd by ſuch other Attempts, as it is not in our Power either to prevent, or to redreſs.

As for the little Paper, which I have here taken into conſideration, the main Scope and Deſign of it, ſeems to be this: To perſwade weak Perſons, in the firſt place, to *go over* to the *Church of Rome*, they *know not why*; And having ſo done, from thenceforth blindly to Embrace whatſoever that Church ſhall propoſe to them, without either Enquiring before, or Examining after. This indeed, is a moſt admirable way, both of making, and keeping of Proſelytes, and highly to the honour of their *Catholick* cauſe: Which, if theſe kind of Notions be once allow'd, muſt from henceforth ſit down under this Character; That 'tis a Religion which dares not Stand a Rational diſquiſition; Nor can otherwiſe be defended, than by bringing Men under ſuch an *Authority*, as will neither be *Ask'd* any *Queſtions*, nor *Give* any *Reaſons*.

I do not at all wonder that thoſe of the Church of *Rome*, are ſo Zealous in the defence of ſuch a Blind Obedience; ſuch an Unreaſonable Credulity. 'Tis a Miſerable thing, to be reduced to ſuch Streights, I do confeſs; But yet when Matters are come to ſuch a Paſs, that they have no other Way left them to defend their Religion; We ought not to wonder if We ſee them inſiſt, as accordingly they do, upon it.

Tranſubſtantiation is a Doctrine, that no *Reaſon* can digeſt: The *worſhip* of *Images*, an *Idolatry*, never to be reconciled with the Principles of the *Chriſtian Religion*. The denial of the *Cup* to the *Layity*, is ſuch a bare-faced Contradiction of our

Saviour's Inſtitution, as ſhould Men be permitted to enquire into it, the meaneſt Capacity muſt diſcover their Preſumption; nor could all the Wit, or Learning in the World, be able to excuſe it.

The *Religious worſhip* of *Saints* and *Reliques*; The *Adoration* of the *Hoſt*; The *Merits* of *Good works*; The pretended Power of the *Pope* in the buſineſs of *Purgatory* and *Indulgences*; and the yet worſer preſumption of every private *Prieſt*, in the Vaſt concern of *forgiving Sins*; The Unreaſonable, as well as Anti-Scriptural Practice, of keeping the *Publick Service* of the *Church* in a *Language* not *underſtood* by the *People*; The *Superſtitious Ceremonies* with which they have not only corrupted, but overwhelm'd all the *Devotions* of their *Church*; and Laſtly, that diſcouraging, as well as Unreaſonable pretence, of making the *validity* of their *Sacraments* to depend upon the *Intention*, (that is to ſay, in other words, on the meer *Will* and *Pleaſure*) of him by whom they are *Adminiſtred*; Theſe, and many other doctrines, and Practices of their Religion, are ſuch, as ſhould they once be expoſed to a fair Examination; they are ſenſible they muſt be rejected, and even deteſted, by all Serious, and Conſidering Men.

It is therefore abſolutely neceſſary that their Religion ſhould be hid, that it may be defended. To diſcover, were to ruine it. He who will be a thorough-pac'd *Papiſt*, muſt believe he knows not why, or he will never believe at all. In ſhort, ſuch Corruptions as theſe, like the *Myſteries* of the *Heathens*, may Gain a Reverence whilſt they are conceal'd; and People are ſuffered to look no farther than the outward Pomp, and Shew of them: But ſhould they once be permitt ed

mitted freely to Enquire into their Religion, They would find it, in theſe Matters, to be ſo contrary to the Goſpel of Chriſt, that all their Pretences to an Infallible Spirit would prove inſufficient to keep them from forſaking of them.

But however the Gentleman who now pretends to ſet up his reſt in this way, will needs be thought to have followed the *conduct* of *Right Reaſon* in it; and *to have done nothing but what is exactly conformed to that Reaſon.* And of this we ſhall be able to make a better Judgment when we come to conſider his own Account of the Grounds upon which he went off from us. In the mean time, I muſt freely profeſs, that after the beſt conſideration I have been able to make of this Matter, I do not ſee how any one can become a Proſelite to the *Roman* Church, upon theſe Terms, until Thoſe of that Communion ſhall be able to Give us, a full, clear, and diſtinct Anſwer, to the following Points: And when they ſhall have done that, I do not much care if I promiſe them to come my Self into that number.

1*ſt.* Then, let them ſhew us that our Saviour *Chriſt* has appointed ſome *One*, *particular Church*, Among all the *Chriſtian Churches* in the World; to be our *Guide* in *Matters* of *Faith:* And endued it with all thoſe qualifications, which themſelves allow to be neceſſary in order thereunto.

2*dly.* That that Church, which now is, and ſhall for ever hereafter continue to be, in Communion with, or rather (to ſpeak more properly) in Subjection to, the *Pope*, or *Biſhop* of *Rome*, is that *Church.*

3*dly.* Let them tell us what *Perſon*, or Aſſembly, of this *Church* it is, to which our Saviour

Christ has committed this *directive Authority?* Whether he has placed it in the *Persons* of the Bishop of *Rome*, and his Successors? Or in a *Council* of the *Roman Church?* Or in what other *Person*, or *Assembly* we are to look for it?

4*thly*. If he has vested the Bishop of *Rome* with this Authority; Let them shew us, whether we are to Submit, indefinitely, to whatsoever he determines; or only to what he determines formally, and (as they call it) *ex Cathedra*: And again, whether we are to do it absolutely, and without any further Enquiry; or only upon Supposition, that he was rightly informed; that He proceeded in due form, that there was no Fraud, or Collusion made use of to mislead him; and the like.

5*thly*. If this Power of defining Matters of Faith be not in the *Pope*, but in a *Council*; then let them shew us, of what kind Christ has appointed that *Council* to be? By *whom* it is to be *called?* Of *what Persons* it is to *Consist?* Whether the *Authority*, and *Infallibility*, requisite to its Guiding of us, be placed in the *body* of the *Council?* Or whether it Comes from without, *viz.* from the *Popes Accepting*, and *Confirming*, of it? Whether such a *Council* be *Infallible* howsoever it proceeds? Or only if it proceeds according to the Word of God? With Piety, and Impartiality? And how we may be assured that it has done so?

6*thly*. Because there may be a great Variety in the Definitions of *Councils*, as there is in the nature of the things which they define; Let them tell us, farther, Whether their *Guidance* extends (Universally) to whatsoever they propose? Or whether they are Infallible, and by con-

conſequence to be followed by us, only in the *fundamental Articles* of our *Religion*; and may either *Err themſelves*, or *Deceive us*, in other Matters?

7*thly*. If their Authority reaches only to the *fundamental Articles* of *Religion*; then let them give us ſome rule whereby We may be able Certainly to diſcern, When any *Article* is *fundamental*? And in the conſequence thereof know Whether we ought, without any more ado, to Submit to their Definition of it.

8*thly*. And having thus ſettled the ſeat of this Infallibility; let them in the next place, ſhew us how we may Come to a Certain Knowledge, and Underſtanding, of the right Faith by it? Whether our Saviour has empowered every *Biſhop*, or *Prieſt* of the Church of *Rome*, to conduct Us? Or what Other means he has provided for our direction, in theſe matters?

9*thly*. Let them tell us, How far their Authority, in this Particular, Extends? Whether they can only *propoſe* to Us the *Words* of their *Churches Definitions*? Or, whether they may go on to *Interpret* the *Senſe* of them? And if the Latter, Whether we are to look upon every Particular *Biſhop*, or *Prieſt*, to be an *Infallible Interpreter* of the *Churches Senſe*? Or Whether ſuch Perſons may *miſtake* in the delivery of it? And if they may, How We may at any time be *infallibly* aſſured, that they do not?

10*thly*. Laſtly. If the Power of the Romiſh *Clergy*, in *Particular*, Extends no farther than barely to propoſe to us the *Words* of the *Churches definitions*; and for the Reſt, we muſt ſhift for our ſelves, and underſtand the Senſe of them, as well as we can; let them inform us, whether

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All the *definitions* of that *Church* in matters of Faith, are ſo *clear*, and *deciſive*, that 'tis not poſſible to miſtake the Senſe of them? Or if they are not, let them ſhew us Wherein they have the advantage of us: Who, after all, are left to themſelves, to Underſtand, as well as they can, the definitions of their Church, in Matters of Faith; as we are, in like manner, left to our Selves to underſtand, as well as we can, the definitions of our Saviour, and his Apoſtles, in the holy Scriptures Concerning Them.

If the Gentlemen of the *Roman* Church ſhall complain, that in the particulars here propoſed to them, I have multiplied difficulties without need; They may pleaſe to Conſider, that not only we are yet to be perſwaded of the truth of all theſe things, but that even they themſelves, if they will deal ingeniouſly with us, muſt confeſs, that without being fully ſatisfied in them, We cannot reaſonably give up our Selves to their Conduct. And how poſitive ſoever they are, that we ought to lay aſide our *Reaſon* as ſoon as it has brought us into their Communion; Yet I Do not find that they are arrived to ſo much confidence as to tell us, that we ought to abandon it before; And ſo go into their *Church*, we know not *Why*; as well as being in, be led we know not by *Whom*, or *Whither?*

However, to clear this matter beyond all reaſonable exception; let us ſuppoſe a *Popiſh Miſſionary* were now, upon their own Grounds, to ſet upon one of our Religion, who had but any tolerable Ability, and with that an honeſt Reſolution to defend himſelf againſt his Aſſaults? 'Tis, I confeſs, a *Caſe* that very ſeldom happens, becauſe they ſeldom care to meddle with ſuch

ſuch perſons: But yet a *Caſe* it is, that they cannot in honour deny me, to make uſe of on this Occaſion; and that is all that I at preſent deſire to do. His Argument, muſt (I conceive) run thus:

" *In matters of Religion, Every one ought to build* " *his Faith upon thoſe Grounds which have the great-* " *eſt Certainty in them: But the Grounds on which* " *we, of the Church of* Rome, *build our Faith, are* " *much more Certain, than thoſe on which you* Prote- " ſtants *build yours: And therefore you ought to quit* " *your own, Uncertain Way, and build your Faith* " *on thoſe Certain and Infallible Grounds on which we* " *build ours.*

The Offer, I think is fair; and I ſhall not except againſt it: All I deſire, is, that he would pleaſe to make ſome proof of his pretenſions: and that, I ſuppoſe, he would not think fit to deny. Let us therefore ſee, How His proof muſt proceed.

" *Scripture interpreted by an* Infallible Guide, *is* " *a much more certain Ground of Faith, than the ſame* " *Scripture interpreted by Every Man's* Own Private " *and* fallible Reaſon. *But our Faith,* (*who are of the* " Roman *Church*) *is built upon Scripture interpreted* " *by an* Infallible Guide; *yours upon the ſame Scrip-* " *ture interpreted by your* Own Private *and* fallible " Reaſon: *Therefore the Ground of our Faith is* " *much more Certain, and more Safe than yours.*

To ſay nothing, at preſent, in defence of the Foundation on which we build our Faith; and concerning which I ſhall ſpeak more fully hereafter: Evident it is, that to make good this pretence in favour of their Church, theſe *four* things muſt be proved by them; as being abſolutely neceſſary to a Satisfactory Vindication of it.

it. 1*ſt*. That they have in their Church an *Infallible Guide* to *Interpret* the *Holy Scriptures* for them, in *matters* of *Faith*. 2*dly*. They muſt ſhew us, *Who* this *Guide* is? 3*dly*. They muſt tell us, *How far* his *Authority* does *Extend?* and 4*thly*. Muſt declare, How we may come to an *Infallible Knowledge* of the *Right Faith*, by ſuch his *Interpretation?*

1*ſt* Then I demand; How they will prove that they have, in the *Roman* Church, any ſuch *Infallible Guide*, (as this Argument ſuppoſes,) in *matters* of *Faith?* I ſay, in the *Roman* Church: For however they may accuſtom themſelves to call their Church the *Catholique Church*, and themſelves *Catholiques*; yet they muſt remember, that they have now to do with thoſe who look upon it as a very fooliſh, and Even Ridiculous, Affectation; to give the title of the *Whole Church* to that which is, at moſt, but *a part* of it; and that, as we are perſwaded, one of the moſt Vitiated, and Corrupted, of any in the whole World.

Here therefore it is that we expect a Proof: That either from *Scripture*, *Reaſon*, or ſome other the like ground of *Argumentation*, in which we are on all hands agreed, they will make out to us one of theſe two Things: Either that *Chriſt* has left ſome one *particular Church*, to be a Conſtant, Standing *Guide* to all others in *matters of Faith*: Or that he has Conſtituted the *Church Catholique*, to be ſuch *a Guide*; and that the *Roman*-Church is that *Catholique*, or that *particular-Church*, (for to us it is Indifferent) which is to *Guide* us, by his appointment, in theſe matters.

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What kind of proof it is that we think we have reaſon to expect of theſe, and the following Points, in order to our ſatisfactory Conviction of the Truth of them; I ſhall hereafter enquire: But that ſome proof ought to be made of them they muſt confeſs; unleſs they will ſay, that we ought to forſake our own Religion and embrace theirs, without any Reaſon at all; which for their own Credit, if not for our Encouragement, we hope they will not ſay.

But becauſe it is not enough to know that they have an *Infallible Guide* among them, unleſs we are alſo told *who* he is, and *how* we may *apply* to *him*: Therefore 2*dly*, To the proof of this *firſt point*, that they have ſuch a help beyond us, it will be neceſſary for them to add, *Who* this *Guide* is? And *Where* he is to be met with?

And this is a point that I ſhould the rather deſire to be ſatisfy'd in, becauſe I have ſome reaſon to believe, that thoſe of the Church of *Rome* are not yet themſelves agreed about it. Now this as it gives me a juſt ground to ſuſpect that they have no ſuch *Guide* at all: (For I can hardly think but that if *Chriſt* had appointed ſuch *a Guide*, he would alſo have very plainly, and poſitively, told us to whom he had committed a *Place*, and *Buſineſs*, of ſuch mighty Truſt in, and Conſequence to, his Church!) So without a clear and certain determination of this matter, I do not ſee but that all the benefit of ſuch a *Guide* muſt be utterly loſt to them. There being, in my apprehenſion, but little difference between not having *any Infallible Guide at all*, and not knowing *Who this In-*

Infallible Guide is? and *where to Recur to him.*

Here therefore I must again desire their Assistance: That before I part with my *Reason*, and the *Holy Scriptures*, they will please to tell me what *Guide* it is that they intend to Substitute in their stead, and what *Authority* this *Guide* has to require of me such an absolute, and servile, Submission, as they talk of, to his Conduct? Two Pretenders I am told there are among them to this Power, the *Pope*, and a *General Council*. Which of these has the clearest Title to it, I would be glad to know: And under what Limitations he is to proceed in the Exercise of it?

But further, "Seeing the Enquiry we are now upon is, concerning *a Guide in matters of Faith*; and *matters* of *Faith* are both very many in number, and very different in their kinds; some of them so Essential to the Foundation of our Religion, that we cannot Err in them without the hazard of our Salvation: Others of a lesser Consequence, and in which Error, or Ignorance, may be supposed, and yet our Salvation be never the more endanger'd by it: Therefore, 3*dly*. To clear this matter the more perfectly, I should desire to know, whether this *Guide* (whoever he be) has *Authority*, and is *Infallible*, *in All things pertaining to Religion*; or only in *those things* which are of the *greatest Consequence*, and commonly known by the Character of the *Fundamental Articles of Faith*. For otherwise, till this be resolved, tho we should know our *Guide*, yet we should still be ignorant how far we are to follow him: And for want of that, may run as much hazard of Erring or being Deceived, as if we had no *Guide* at all.

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And this ſhews the Reaſon of the *6th.* and *7th.* queſtions before propoſed; and will be farther evident, by putting the matter into an Inſtance that may help to reduce it to practice. I will ſuppoſe then that we are agreed, that the *Pope*, or *Council*, is to be our *Guide*. If we are to yield to his determination in *Every thing*; we know our duty, and have no more to do, but to ſubmit and believe. But if it be reſolved (as I conceive it will be) that the *Authority*, and *Infallibility* of this *Guide*, is to be reſtrained to the defining only of the *Fundamental Articles of Faith*; then 'tis plain we muſt firſt know whether the Doctrine, which we enquire about, be a *Fundamental Article of our Faith*, before we can tell whether our *Guide* has any *Authority*, or even *Ability*, to conduct us in it.

Let *Tranſubſtantiation* therefore be the point in doubt; (if at leaſt it be ſuch a point as will admit of any:) I deſire to know what I am to believe concerning it. The *Council* of *Trent*, my infallible *Guide*, delivers its ſenſe of it. Am I to ſubmit to its Authority or no? To know this (on the ſuppoſition before made) I muſt firſt enquire, whether the determination of the *Manner* of *Chriſt's preſence* in the *Euchariſt*, be a *Fundamental Article of Faith?* If it be, my *Guide* is *Infallible*, and muſt be *ſubmitted* to in his *definition of it.* If not, 'tis a Caſe beyond his Juriſdiction; and he may Err, and Miſ-lead me in it. What now ſhall I do? By what means ſhall I know whether this, (and ſo of every other point) be *Fundamental* or not? That this is not a matter proper for my *Guide* to determine, is plain; becauſe it concerns His own Authority. That yet 'tis neceſſary to be very clear-

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ly reſolved, is evident; becauſe otherwiſe my *Guide* will be of no uſe to me: And how we are to reſolve it, I muſt therefore deſire to be informed.

But this will not yet ſuffice. It is not enough to have an *Infallible Guide*, and to know in what things he is to be rely'd on; unleſs we be alſo ſhewn, *How we may be Infallibly led by him? The Holy Scriptures* are acknowledged by the *Papiſts*, as well as us, to be the Word of God; and by conſequence an Infallible *Rule*, or *Guide*, in *matters of Faith*. Yet the Gentlemen of the *Romiſh*-Church deny that there is any *Certainty*, much leſs any *Infalibillity*, to be had in our following of them; becauſe (that tho the *Scriptures* be *Infallible*, yet) we our ſelves are not: And therefore we may miſtake their meaning, and ſo Err, notwithſtanding the *Infallibility* of the *Rule* which we go by.

Here therefore I muſt once more intreat theſe Gentlemen to deal plainly with me, and ſhew *4thly. How I ſhall be ſure*, when I have given up my ſelf to the Conduct of this Infallible *Guide*, that I ſhall be *Infallibly led by him?*

As for any *written Definitions* of *Faith*, thoſe I take to be already excluded; for ſuch the *Scriptures are*, and yet they tell us we are never the better for them: And I hope they will not be ſo raſh as to pretend that the Writings of Men, (be their Authority never ſo great) are capable of guiding us more certainly, and more ſecurely, than the Sacred Oracles of God. The *Holy Ghoſt*, by the Sacred Penmen, *Wrote* the *Scriptures*: If their *Guide*, (whether *Pope* or *Council*,) be *Infallible*, it muſt be be-

because the same Blessed *Spirit* which once spake in the *Holy Scriptures*, speaks now in their *Definitions*. If therefore I cannot have any Certainty by following the sense of the *Holy Ghost* speaking to me in *Scripture*; How shall I be more secure in following the Conduct of the same Blessed *Spirit*, when he speaks to me in the *Decrees* of a *Pope*, or *Council*?

It is therefore a *Living Guide*, which they boast of, and which we (it seems) are defective in: And who this *Living Guide* is, to whom, as to some Oracle, we are to Recur on all Occasions, is the question which I now desire to be resolved in. The *Pope* is at a great distance; and it would be exceeding troublesom to the good old Man to be bound, in *Person*, to resolve the Doubts of all the Christians in the World, should they be obliged to resort to him. *General Councils* are seldom sitting: 'Tis a Hundred and Forty Years, since we have had any that has pretended to that Character; and therefore they, to be sure, can be no such constant *Living Guide*, as we are now enquiring after. Who then is the Person to whom we are to address our selves, for our Instruction? And how shall we be sure that he doth Guide us aright, in all such things wherein we are taught to apply our selves unto him?

If it be said, that every *Doctor*, or *Priest*, who knows what the Church has defined, is capable of doing this; I must then beg leave to ask, How I shall be sure that he does not *mistake* the *Churches Sense*, and so lead me into Error by it?

We know very well what the *Scriptures* say in many particulars, in which the Church of *Rome*

theleſs departs from them. And we look upon the *Scriptures* in thoſe Particulars to be ſo very Plain, and Poſitive; that 'tis next to impoſſible that we ſhould be miſtaken in our underſtanding of them. Yet they tell us we are deceived; Nay, and can never be certain that we are not, ſo long as we truſt to our own *Private Reaſon* to Guide us into the meaning of them.

Now, I conceive, that the *Prieſts*, and *Doctors*, of the *Romiſh*-Church, do interpret the definitions of their Councils by Their *Private Reaſon*, no leſs than we do the Holy Scriptures, by *Our Private Reaſon*. I would therefore gladly know, How they come to be more *Infallible* in delivering the *ſenſe* of *the One*, than we are in delivering the *ſenſe* of the *Other*. What is *plainly written*, is equally eaſie to be underſtood, in one Book, as in another. *Private Reaſon* is the ſame in both Churches. If therefore we can have no *Certainty* in underſtanding by *our Reaſon*, *plain Texts of Scripture*; How can they have any more *Certainty* in underſtanding by *their Reaſon*, the *plain Canons* of their *Councils*, or the *plain Decrees* of their *Popes?*

That our Saviour Chriſt Inſtituted his laſt Supper in *both kinds*; That he gave it to his Diſciples *in both*; and bade them, in like manner, to *do this in remembrance of him*; is as plainly delivered in *Holy Scripture*, as it is delivered in the *Council* of *Trent*, that notwithſtanding this, there neither *now is*, *nor ever was*, *any neceſſity for the Layty to Communicate ſo as Chriſt hath appointed*. I meddle not at preſent with the matter of Right, on either ſide: All I now ask is only this; Why my *Private Reaſon* may not as *Certainly* inform me, in this Caſe, how

Chriſt

Chriſt Inſtituted this Holy Sacrament, as the *Private Reaſon* of a Romiſh Prieſt can inform him, What was the Definition of that *Synod* concerning it?

You ſee, Sir, what reaſon we have to deſire a full, and clear ſatisfaction in the ſeveral Points before propoſed; that ſo we may upon ſure, and rational grounds, give up our ſelves to the Conduct of ſuch a *Guide*, as thoſe of the Church of *Rome* propoſe to us. Give me leave to add, that all theſe Points muſt not only be *diſtinctly reſolved*, but muſt be very *evidently proved* too. 'Tis not a light thing for a Man to part with the two greateſt Helps which the Divine Providence has beſtowed upon Mankind for their Direction in matters of Religion; *viz.* His *Own Reaſon*; and the *Word of God*. Thoſe who expect thus much from us, ought, at leaſt, to give us ſome very good aſſurance that it is the will of God we ſhould do ſo: And that having done it, we ſhall be more ſecure under their Conduct, than we could have been in our own.

How far thoſe of that Communion have hitherto been from offering any ſuch ſatisfactory Arguments to us, I may leave it to the Diſcourſes, which have been written by them upon this Subject, to inform you. Had they found out any better ſince, I do not ſuppoſe them to be ſo little concern'd for their Own Intereſts, as not to have given them a Place in the following *Paper*. But alas! this is a Point in which *natural Reaſon* has nothing to do: Nor is there any thing in all the *Canon of Scripture*, to afford them the leaſt ſhew of a *Divine Revelation* for it. And this terrible prejudice there lies againſt them; That, after all their boaſts of an *Infallible*

Guide, there is hardly any Church in the World that is guilty of more, or more dangerous *Errors*; or in which there have risen more *factions* and *divisions*, than in theirs; who would be thought to have the only certain means, to prevent and redress both.

The truth is, as they have ordered the Matter, 'tis no easie undertaking for them to prove that Authority which they pretend to. That there is no common Principle, generally implanted in the Nature of Man, from whence it may be deduced; That the Church of *Rome* is *Infallible* in *matters of Faith*, and has a *divine Authority* to *Guide* all others in them; they themselves must allow. That there is nothing in the *Holy Scriptures* to warrant such a Conclusion, we are as sure, as 'tis possible for us to be sure of any thing. But suppose there were not One, or Two, but a Hundred passages, that seem'd to say all that they desire; yet what advantage would it be to them, who have laid it down as a Fundamental Principle; That we can have no dependance upon Scripture, whilst Interpreted only by our *Own private Reason*. So that were we otherwise never so willing to make Scripture the Judge between us, and to be concluded by its Authority; Yet they themselves have told us we must not do it: Seeing how clearly soever that may seem to be on their side, yet we can have no Assurance that we do not Err, in our *Own Private*, and *Fallible Interpretation* of it.

The only way then that, I can imagine, remains for them to convince us of their Authority, must be to work some *Miracle* in proof of it; and that such as may assure us, that God enabled them to work it in *Testimony* of their

Infal-

Infallibility, and to *oblige* us *to ſubmit* to the *Belief*, and *Authority* of it. This I ſay is the only proof, that, if they will ſtand to their own Principles, they can make of it: And when they ſhall have done this, then, (and not till then) it will be Reaſonable for us to forſake the *Word* of *God*, atteſted by *Miracles*, and confeſs'd by all to be *Divine*; and to ſet up their Churches Definitions inſtead of it.

Having ſaid thus much to ſhew thoſe buſie Men of the *Romiſh*-Church, who are ſo Zealous for our Converſion, what kind of Proofs they are that we expect from them, in order to their gaining of us; that they may not complain, (as they uſually do) that I have only endeavoured to deſtroy the Grounds of their Faith, without ſhewing on what Foundation we build our Own: I ſhall now briefly declare what the *Reſolution* of our *Faith* is; and let them make what Exceptions they can againſt it.

And here, they will, I preſume, give me leave to ſuppoſe a few things, as allow'd of on both ſides; and which we are ready to make good againſt any who ſhall think fit to diſpute them with us. **That there is a God.* **That the Chriſtian Religion is of divine Inſtitution.* **That the Holy Scriptures of the New Teſtament, were Written by thoſe whoſe Names they bear.* **That thoſe Perſons were the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts of Chriſt*; * And *Inſpir'd by the Holy Ghoſt, both in their Preaching, and Writing, of the Goſpel.* And Laſtly; * *That God has implanted a certain faculty in all of us, whereby to apprehend, and underſtand what is propos'd to us; and by a careful uſe whereof we may be able clearly to diſcern, what is plainly, and intelligibly laid before us.*

Now theſe *common Principles of Reaſon*, and *Chriſtianity*, being ſuppoſed; The Foundation of our Faith is this.

1*ſt*. As we acknowledge the *Holy Scriptures* to be the *Word* of *God*, and to have been written by the *Inſpiration* of the *Holy Ghoſt*; So we do, in Conſequence hereof, Profeſs, That whatſoever is contain'd in them, ought to be readily received, and firmly believed, by every Chriſtian.

2*dly*. Theſe *Holy Scriptures* being deſign'd by God to convey the Principles of our Religion to us; and to be a *Rule of Faith* to the Chriſtian-Church in all Ages, to the end of the World; We are perſwaded that whatſoever is neceſſary to be *Believed*, or *Known*, of *any Man*, in *order to his Salvation*, is *fully* and *perfectly* contain'd in them. For beſides that, were not this ſo, they would not anſwer the *End* for which they were Written: We cannot conceive how it could be conſiſtent either with the Wiſdom, the Juſtice, or Goodneſs of God, to deliver an *Imperfect Rule* of *Faith* to us; which yet he muſt have done, were any *neceſſary part* of our *Faith*, omitted in them.

3*dly*. Seeing the *Scriptures* would in Vain have been written, in order to this End, unleſs they were written in ſuch a *Manner* as to enable us to diſcern by them, What the true *Chriſtian Faith* is; Therefore we ſuppoſe, farther, that God has cauſed *all the neceſſary Articles of our Faith*, to be both ſo *fully delivered*, and ſo *clearly expreſſed*, in Them; that whoſoever ſhall diligently apply himſelf to the ſtudy of them, may be effectually Inſtructed by them in all ſuch matters as are *Neceſſary* to be *Known*, and *Believed* by him, in order *to his Salvation*.

4*thly*.

4*thly.* Whatſoever is plainly delivered in the *Holy Scriptures*, and *clearly apprehended* by us; We not only firmly believe to be *True*, but withall to have the utmoſt degree *of Certainty*, that any thing, of that nature, is capable of: Nor can we imagine what more, or greater Aſſurance, we could have of any *Article* of our *Faith*, were we to receive it immediately from the *mouth* of an *Apoſtle*, than we now may have, by reading the ſame things *written* by *him*, which (in the other Caſe,) we ſhould *hear* from him.

5*thly.* Now of ſuch Evidence as this; we, in the firſt Place, profeſs all the ſeveral *Articles* of our *Apoſtles Creed* to be: Which therefore we not only firmly believe to be *True*, but are ready, from the *Authority* of *Holy Scripture*, to *prove*, againſt any who ſhall deny, or doubt of them.

6*thly.* Of the ſame Evidence we account many other things contained in the Holy Scriptures: Such are * The *Hiſtorical parts of the New Teſtament:* * The *Moral Precepts* delivered by our *Saviour*, and his *Apoſtles* in it: * The *Inſtitution* of the *two Sacraments* of *Baptiſm*, and the *Lord's Supper:* * Several of the *Apoſtolical determinations*, in their *Epiſtles*, not to mention any more particulars.

7*thly.* As for ſuch things as are more doubtfully, or obſcurely deliver'd in the *Holy Scriptures*; We make uſe of the beſt Helps we can for our underſtanding of the meaning of the *Holy Spirit* in them. Thoſe who are Learned, ſtudy thoſe Sacred Writings with all diligence. Thoſe who are not, conſult, and adviſe with them that are. And doing this, we are ſatisfied either that we ſhall not miſtake the ſenſe of them, or that if we do, ſuch an involuntary

tary Error, ſhall be no prejudice to any of our Salvation: There being nothing more worthy of God's pity, or that ſhall more certainly have it, than an *Innocent Error*; eſpecially where it ariſes from the difficulty of diſcovering what the Mind of God is, and not from any want of a due care, in enquiring after it.

Theſe are the Grounds on which we build *our Faith*: The *Word of God* is *our Rule*; Our *Own Reaſon* the *Inſtrument* which we make uſe of for the underſtanding of it. Our *Helps* are ſuch as theſe: * The Study of the *Languages*, in which the *Holy Scriptures* were *written*: * A diligent *Collation* of the ſeveral *Places of Scripture* with one another. * The Senſe of thoſe *Writers* who lived the neareſt to the time of our *Saviour*, and his *Apoſtles*: * The Judgment of the *Biſhops* and *Paſtors* of the *Preſent Church*: And above all, * Our Pious, and Hearty *Prayers* to *God*, for his Aſſiſtance; That he would *open our Eyes, and ſhew us the marvellous things of his Law.*

If thoſe of the Church of *Rome* have any other, and better Helps, we are ready to receive them. But for our parts, were we convinced that the *Definitions* of their *Church* were as Infallible, as they pretend that they are; yet we cannot ſee, but that they muſt at laſt come to the ſame *Fallible method* (as they call it) of *Interpreting* of them, that we take for the *Underſtanding* of the *Holy Scriptures*. And if ſo, let them tell us, if they can, what the advantage would be of only changing our *Rule*; and Subſtituting the *Definitions* of their *Church*, for the *Books* of *Holy Scripture*. What is *plainly written*, may with equal Certainty be underſtood, whether

ther it be written by a *Synod*, or an *Evangeliſt*. If therefore they think they have a ſufficient Certainty in building their Faith upon their *Own private Underſtanding* of what is *defined* by the *One*, we muſt beg leave to ſay, that we think we may have, at leaſt, an equal *Certainty* in building our Faith upon the like *Private Underſtanding* of what is *delivered* by the *Other*. Unleſs they ſhall ſay, that the *Scripture* it ſelf is not of equal Certainty with the *Definitions* of their *Councils*; which, as conceited as they are of their own *Infallibility*, yet I hope they will not preſume to ſay.

But 'tis time to Conclude theſe Preliminary Reflections: And to enquire what our New, pretended *Convert*, has to offer in his own defence; and in order to our Conviction.

THE

The Title of his *Letter* is this.

A Rational Account given by a Young Gentleman to his Uncle, of the Motives and Reaſons why he is become a Roman-Catholick. *And why he now declines any farther Diſputes or Conteſts about Matters of* RELIGION.

1 Pet. III. *Ver.* 15.

Be always Ready to give an account to every man that asketh you a Reaſon of the Hope that is in you.

TWO things there are which this *Inſcription* promiſes, and of Both which we are to expect a *Rational Account* in the following Letter. 1ſt. *Of the Motives, and Reaſons, Why this* Gentleman *became a Roman Catholick.* And 2dly. *Why he now declines any farther Diſputes, or Conteſts, about Matters of Religion.* The Points are both of them of ſome Moment, and will do great Service to the *Romiſh Cauſe*, if they can indeed be *Rationally Accounted* for. Let us ſee how well the Performance anſwers to the Undertaking.

Letter P. 1.] "*I received yours, Dear Uncle, "wherein with much Heat and Tranſport of "Zeal, you demand of me; Why I am turn'd "a Roman Catholick? And ſeem mightily to "blame me, as Raſh and Inconſiderate, in "changing my Religion. Pardon me, Sir, if*

" *if I declare unto you, I became, and ſtill con-*
" *tinue (through the grace of God enlightning*
" *my Soul) a Roman Catholick, upon theſe*
" *Rational Grounds, or Principles.*

Whether this *Letter* were really written upon the *Occaſion*, and ſent to ſuch a *Relation* as is here pretended, I do not think it at all Material to enquire. The *Fiction*, (if it were ſuch) was not contriv'd amiſs, to the Advantage of the *Church* of *Rome*: But ſerves at once both to publiſh their Conqueſt, and therein to Magnifie their little Victory in gaining a Proſelyte among us: And to convey the more plauſibly, and perhaps more ſuccesfully too, thoſe *Motives* of *Conviction* to others, by which One, and he no doubt a Man of Parts, had been perſwaded. For what can we think leſs of a Perſon, who has ſo many *Reaſons* to Offer, for what he has done: And declares more than once, that *He did make uſe of the* Reaſon *God had given him* in this Change; *and that his proceedings therein had been exactly conform'd to that Reaſon.* p. 7.

Let. ib.] " *Firſt, my Reaſon convinced me, I*
" *ought to believe, as neceſſary to my Salvation,*
" *not only ſome, but all* (Mat. xxviii. ver. 20.)
" *thoſe Points, or Articles, which Jeſus Chriſt Re-*
" *vealed, and Commanded me to believe; And*
" *to Reject and Renounce as Hereſie* (Titus iii.
" ver. 10.) *all Opinions repugnant to thoſe Arti-*
" *cles. I ſay, not only ſome, but all Revealed;*
" *for whoſoever miſ-believes, or queſtions, any*
" *one Article ſo Revealed, miſ-believes and*
" *queſtions the Veracity of Chriſt the Revealer.*

If the former part of this Reaſon be to be interpreted by the latter, the ſum of it will amount to no more than this, That *no Chriſtian*

ought

ought to queſtion, or disbelieve (for that I conceive he means) *any Article of what our Saviour Chriſt has Revealed.* And in this, he may be ſure, we are perfectly agreed with him. But if he ſhould chance to mean, as his Expreſſions ſeem rather to intimate that he does, that it is *neceſſary to Salvation for every one* (expreſly) *to believe not only ſome, but all thoſe* Points, *or* Articles, *which our Saviour Chriſt has revealed, and Commanded us to Believe; And to reject, and renounce as Hereſie, all Opinions repugnant to thoſe Articles*; tho' that be an Aſſertion more liable to Exception, yet I ſhall not at preſent enter on any Diſpute with him concerning it. It ſhall ſuffice to obſerve, that the *Paſſages* of *Scripture* which he refers to in Vindication of it, do by no means prove any ſuch thing: As by a brief View of each of them, may Evidently appear.

Our *Saviour* having Commiſſion'd his *Apoſtles*, Mat. xxviii. *To go and teach all Nations*; i. e. To *Inſtruct* them in the *Faith*, and *Knowledge* of the *Goſpel*, in order to their being *Baptized* into the *Beliefe* of it; *Ver.* 19. In the next *Verſe* adds, that having done this, they ſhould warn them moreover to *Obſerve all things, whatſoever I e had Commanded them*; that is, to *lead* their Lives according to the *Rules* which he had delivered to them for that purpoſe. In the *former*, he provides for their *Information* in the *Doctrine*; In the *latter*, for their *Obſervation* of the *Commands* of the *Goſpel.*

From this laſt *Verſe*, our *Proſelyte* infers the *Neceſſity* of *Believing not only ſome, but all thoſe Points, or Articles, which Jeſus Chriſt has revealed.* And his Argument, ſuch as it is, muſt run thus. Chriſt directed his Apoſtles to teach thoſe whom they

they Converted carefully to Obſerve *All* the *Commands* of the *Goſpel*; therefore it is neceſſary to Salvation for every Chriſtian (expreſly) to *Believe All* thoſe *Articles* of *Faith* which he has *Revealed*, and *Commanded* to be *Believed.*

But his next Attempt is, if poſſible, yet worſe. *Tit.* iii. 10. St. *Paul* gives order to *Titus*, that a *Heretick*, *after two Admonitions*, *ſhould be rejected*; that is, *Excommunicated.* Therefore it is our duty to *Reject*, and *Renounce as Heretical*, *All Opinions* contrary to what *Chriſt* has *Revealed.*

Let. ib.] 2dly. "*My Reaſon Convinc'd me*,
"*All*, *or Many of thoſe very Articles*, *were ſo*
"High, and Tranſcendent to my Capacity,
"(2 *Cor.* x. Ver. 5.) *that I could make no*
"*natural Proof or Demonſtration of them*; *nor*
"*ſolve all Difficulties and Objections*, *which*
"*great Wits might frame about them.*

That Many, or rather Moſt of thoſe *Articles*, which make up the *proper Faith* of a *Chriſtian*, as ſuch; were *beyond* our *Capacities* to have *diſcover'd* at *firſt*, and are ſtill too *High* for us to *comprehend*, any farther than our *Saviour* has thought fit to *Reveal* them to Us, is readily acknowledged by Us.. And therefore We freely confeſs, that if God had determined that we ſhould *Believe* theſe things, it was abſolutely neceſſary that he ſhould, ſome way or other, have Revealed them to Us. But then, I hope, this Gentleman will leave God to his liberty to take what method he pleaſes for the doing of this: And ſince the method God has choſen, is that of his *Written Word*, I cannot imagine how he will from hence inferr the neceſſity of any *Other kind* of *Revelation.*

As

As for *ſolving All thoſe Difficulties and Objections which great Wits may frame about theſe matters*; I know no need that every Ordinary Chriſtian has for an Ability to do this. 'Tis enough, that he be Convinc'd that *what* he *believes* is *Revealed* to him by *God*: For the reſt, let the *great Wits* diſpute againſt it as they will, I do not ſee what any Pious Chriſtian has to do to concern himſelf with them.

Indeed, if Men will ſet up *Monſtrous Opinions* of their Own, and call them *Matters of Faith*; and then think to ſilence *all Objections* againſt them with this pretence, that they are *Myſteries* which *tranſcend our Capacities*; We ought not to wonder if not only the *Great Wits*, but Men of the moſt *Ordinary Capacities*, be ſcandalized at them. And this is the Caſe, in the Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation*: The Errors and Impoſſibilities of which are by no means beyond our power to judge of. But where any *Article* of *Faith*, *Revealed to us by God*, is really *above* our *Capacities* to Comprehend; as that of the *Trinity*, in many Circumſtances relating to it, is; and the *Revelation* is *clear* and *poſitive*; and yet ſome Men of *Great Wit* perhaps, but of very little *Piety*, or *Diſcretion*, will be Cavilling at it: 'Tis enough to ſatisfie any *ſober Chriſtian*, and ought to put an End to all Objections againſt it, that we are ſure God has *Revealed* it; and that the Subject is too high for our own *Natural Reaſon* to be able to Penetrate any farther into it, than he has thought fit to Reveal it to us.

Let. P. 2.] 3dly. "*My Reaſon convinced me*; "*That Jeſus Chriſt having obliged me, under* "*pain of Damnation, to believe All, and eve-*"*ry of thoſe Tranſcendent Articles, his Wiſ-*

"*dom*

" *dom and Goodneſs (never deficient to Us in*
" *Neceſſaries) had Provided, and Commiſſioned*
" *Some thing to Teach me, and Guide my Weak-*
" *neſs; and this Something ſuch as might not*
" *be liable to Miſtakes and Errors, and ſo de-*
" *ceive me in theſe Important Matters.*

4thly. " *My Reaſon convinc'd me that this Some-*
" *thing thus ordain'd by Chriſt to Guide me,*
" *was not my own* Self-Interpretation *of Scri-*
" *pture* (2 Pet. i. 20.) *becauſe ſuch Self-In-*
" *terpretation of Scripture might (as it had*
" *done thouſands of others, diſſenting from, and*
" *contradicting each other in thoſe very Arti-*
" *cles) lead me (eſpecially* Unlearned 1 Pet. iii.
" Ver. 16.) *into Deluſions and Fallacies de-*
" *ſtructive to my Salvation.*

That Chriſt having obliged Us to *believe* ſuch *Doctrines* as we were before ſpeaking of, ought alſo to have provided Us ſome *ſufficient Means* of coming to the *knowledge* of *Them*; I have already allow'd: And I now add, that it was for *this* very *End* that the *Holy Scriptures* were Written; and to *this End* it is the duty of every Chriſtian to apply them.

That this *Rule*, or *Guide*, is its *Self Infallible*; and, if *rightly underſtood*, uncapable of leading *Us* into *Error*, we acknowledge alſo. Nay farther, we ſay that every Man is bound, on pain of Damnation, to uſe his utmoſt endeavours to *Underſtand this Rule*, and to *Guide* himſelf aright by it: And in order thereunto, muſt take all poſſible Care to know what is the *Will of God*, declared to him thereby. But how to Order any *Rule* or *Guide* ſo, that it ſhall not be poſſible for any Man by *Ignorance* to *Miſtake*, or thro' *Wilfulneſs*, and *Prejudice*, to pervert the meaning

ing of it, I cannot understand: Unless God should think fit to make every particular Christian *Infallible*; and then I do not see what need there would be of any *Rule*, or *Guide*, at all.

There are, I think, but two ways of coming to the knowledge of what God requires Us to *Believe*, in the ordinary Method of Instruction; *viz.* either by *Word*, or *Writing*. Now since whatever can be *Spoken*, the same may also be *Written*; it must, I conceive, be all one to Us whether we are *taught* by the *One*, or by the *Other*: 'Tis still our *Private Reason* that must be made use of by us to *Understand* the *meaning* of it. And I would be glad to know, why a Man may not as *Certainly believe* what his *Guide writes down* for his *Information*, as he may the same thing *spoken*, or *read* to him.

That our Saviour Christ was *Conceived by the Holy Ghost*, and *Born of the Virgin Mary*, is an *Article* of our *Faith* expressly deliver'd in the *Holy Scriptures*. That being there delivered it must needs be true, (because it comes, in effect, from *God* himself by the *Inspiration of the Holy Ghost*,) I am firmly perswaded. Let this Gentleman enlighten me if he can, and tell me, How he comes to have a Greater assurance either of the meaning, or truth of this *Article*, by having it from his *Living Guide* (if any such he has) than I may have by learning it out of the *Holy Scripture*.

His *Guide* is *Infallible*, (we will suppose it) so is my *Rule*. He understands his *Guide* by the help of his *Private Reason*; so do I my *Rule*. My *Reason* being *Fallible*, I may possibly sometimes mistake the *Sense* of my *Rule*: Why may not he, for the same reason, be as liable to mistake

ſtake ſometimes the *Senſe* of his *Guide*. Where an *Article* is very clearly, and plainly, delivered, I may be very ſure that I do *not miſtake* in following my *Rule*: And this is all that he can pretend to in *following* of *His Guide*. In ſhort; Either let him prove that He has ſome *Infallible Faculty* to Underſtand *Matters* of *Faith by*, which I have not, or we ſhall ſtill ſtand upon *Equal Terms*; Or rather, indeed, I ſhall have much the Advantage of Him. For that the *Scripture is Infallible*, we are all *Agreed*: That his *Guide* is ſo, He can never be ſure; and we are ſure, that 'tis not only no *Infallible Guide* that He has choſen, but an *Ignorant, Blind, Erroneous Church*: And then let him have a care, *leaſt while the Blind leads the Blind, they both fall together into the Ditch.*

But he here again pretends to have Scripture on his ſide. For, Firſt, St. *Peter* ſays, That no *Prophecy of the Scripture is of private Interpretation*; Or rather, of the *proper Motion* of Him who ſpake it. *For*, ſays He, *Prophecy came not in old time by the Will of Man, but Holy Men of God ſpake, being mov'd by the Holy Ghoſt.* Well, what follows? Why even what you pleaſe. The good Man found *Scripture*, and *Private Interpretation* in the *Text*; and that was enough to warrant him to *Refer* to it.

But it may be his next paſſage will make amends for the Impertinence of this: 'Tis from the ſame *Epiſtle*, C. iii. 16. Where the *Apoſtle* ſpeaking of St. *Paul's Epiſtles*, tells us, that *In them there are ſome things hard to be underſtood, which they who were unlearned, and unſtable, Wreſted, (as they did alſo the Other Scriptures) to their Own deſtruction.* What does he infer from this? Thoſe who were *Unlearned*, and *Unſtable, wreſted*

Certain paſſages of *Scripture*, *which were hard to be underſtood, to their Own deſtruction*: Therefore, No one Can be ſure that he does not *miſtake* the *meaning* of the *plaineſt Texts* of *Scripture*, to the *Peril* of his *Salvation*.

This is ſtrange *Logic*; and I fear will prove worſe *Divinity*. For why then did St. *Peter*, who was ſenſible of this danger, nevertheleſs write his *Two Epiſtles*? Or rather, Why did the *Holy Ghoſt*, who knew before hand what would be the Effect of St. *Paul*'s *Epiſtles*, nevertheleſs move him, and the reſt of the *Sacred Writers*, to lay ſuch a ſtumbling-Block in the way of *Chriſtians*? Why, juſt for the ſame Reaſon that Men continue to *Eat* and *Drink*; tho' ſome not doing it with Care and Moderation, have *ſurfeited* themſelves, and fallen into *Feavours*, and *Other Diſeaſes* by it. If Unlearned, and Unſtable Men, will meddle with ſuch paſſages of Scripture as are too hard for them; and make an ill Uſe of them (as this *Author* has done for One) what is this to Pious, and good Mens Endeavouring to Inform themſelves in the *Articles* of *their Faith*, and the *Rules* of a *Holy Life*, from what is clearly, and plainly delivered in them. *Secret things belong to God*, and we muſt not make too bold with them. Time may diſcover that to Others, which at preſent is hid from Us: And for them it was written, not for Us. This was the Caſe of thoſe *Texts* of which St. *Peter* ſpake. They contained *the Signs* and *Prophecies*, of the *deſtruction* of the *Jews*, and of the *End* of the *World*; with ſome other things which were not at that time ſo eaſie to be underſtood, as now they are. But for the *neceſſary Articles* of our *Faith*, and *Rules* of *Practiſe*, they are of General Concern:

And

And if Men will but Read with Care and Piety, they need not fear any danger by it.

Let. P. 2.] 5thly. "*My Reaſon alſo convinced* "*me*; *There is not aſſignable any Other Guide*, "*or Atteſtant upon Earth, ordained by Chriſt* "*to Inſtruct me, and All Chriſtians in every of* "*the abovemention'd important* Points, *or Ar-* "*ticles, than that Univerſal Body of Paſtors* "*and People, term'd in the Apoſtles Creed,* "The Holy Catholick Church.

6thly. "*My Reaſon moreover convinced me*; "*That this Church being alone thus ordained* "*and commmiſſioned by Chriſt to Teach in his* "*Name, thoſe Goſpel-Truths, with an Obliga-* "*tion in Every One, under penalty of Dam-* "*nation* (Mat. xviii. Ver. 17.) To Hear, "*and Submit to her Belief and Doctrine: She* "*alone accordingly hath, and Retains for ever,* "*by the Sacred Promiſes and Covenant of* "*Chriſt*, His Bleſſed preſence, (Mat. xxviii. "Ver. 20.) *and* Spirit of Truth, (Jo. xiv. "Ver. 16.) *to direct Her in delivering aright* "*theſe Neceſſary Articles of Belief, and di-* "*ſtinguiſhing the ſame Articles from Corrupti-* "*ons and Errors oppoſite to Them.*

Our new Convert being thus Methodically arrived to the Neceſſity of *Some Guide*, (beſides the *Holy Scriptures*) in *Matters* of *Faith*; now proceeds by degrees to find out, Who this *Guide* muſt be. There is not, ſays he, *aſſignable any Other, but the Catholick Church*; (meaning thereby, the *Roman-Catholick*, as they uſe to ſpeak) Therefore that muſt be the *Guide*. And to this I ſhall need make no Other Anſwer, than that we know neither any *need for*, nor *promiſe of*, any ſuch *Living Guide* at all; and therefore are

not concern'd to enquire, Who this *Guide* is?

But has not Chriſt *Obliged every one under Penalty of Damnation to Hear the Church?* (Mat. xviii. 17.) that is, *to Submit to her Belief and Doctrine?* If he means in that paſſage of St. *Matthew*, I Anſwer plainly, He has not. Our Saviour was, in that place, directing his Diſciples how to End their private Controverſies with One Another. That if One of their Brethren treſpas'd againſt Them, They ſhould firſt Admoniſh him privately of his Fault. If that did not do; that then they ſhould proceed to Repeat the Admonition, before two or three Witneſſes. If he ſtill continued Obſtinate; that they ſhould, finally, bring the matter to a Publick Hearing before the *Church*; that is, that *Particular Church*, of which he was a Member: And if he neglected their Admonition, that from thenceforth ſuch a Perſon ſhould be look'd upon as a Heathen, and a Publican. What is this to the *Power* of the *Church* of *Rome* to *Guide* us in *Matters* of *Faith?*

So little is there in his firſt Proof; Let us ſee whether his next be any better, *Mat.* xxviii. 20. Our Saviour immediately before his *Aſcenſion into Heaven* promis'd his *Apoſtles*, and in them the *Church*, *That he would be with them alway, even unto the End of the World.* We do not make any queſtion of it. But who told this Gentleman that the *End* of his being with the *Church*, was this, *to direct it in delivering aright the neceſſary Articles of Faith, and to diſtinguiſh the ſame from Corruptions and Errors Oppoſite to them?* Or becauſe we do not doubt, but that Chriſt will be ſo far aſſiſtant to his *Church*, that all *Neceſſary and ſaving Truth*, ſhall be *perpetually*

taught

taught, and *believed*, in it; How does it from hence follow, that this *truth* shall be *taught* in the *Church* of *Rome* more than in the *Greek*, or *Any Other Church?* Or if *taught* in the *Church* of *Rome*; that it shall be Taught in their *Publick Schools*, and *Churches*; and not among some *Private*, and *better Instructed Persons?* Or if *taught* in *Publick*; yet be *taught* without all *mixture* of *Error*, that may be contrary even to the *Truth taught* by Them.

Why Yes, He has another place, that will clear up these difficulties. *Jo.* xiv. 16. *If ye love me, keep my Commandments: And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you Another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot Receive.*---But this promise either proves nothing at all; Or, if it does, it proves too much. If he supposes that the whole *Church* of *Christ*, (or at least the *Bishops*, and *Pastors* of it) were to enjoy the same Fulness, and *Gifts*, of the *Holy Ghost*, that the *Apostles* themselves had; then every *Bishop*, and *Priest*, (if not every *Private Christian*) is *Infallible*. Nay and not only so; but can, upon Occasion, *work Miracles*; *speak with Tongues*; *Prophecy*; and do all the Rest of those *Works* which the *Apostles* themselves did.

He will therefore, I presume, say, that tho *Holy Ghost* was not promis'd to the *Successors* of *the Apostles* in the *Church*, in the same measure that He was given to the *Apostles* themselves, *at the beginning*. To what therefore shall we *Reduce* the substance of this *Promise*; and where shall we *fix* the *bounds* of it? I conceive we cannot better do it, than by Confining it to such *Gifts* and *Graces*, as both *Pastors*, and *People*,

ſhould in their ſeveral *Places* and *Stations*, ſtand in need of. And then before He can from hence Conclude the *Infallibility* of the *Church*, He muſt firſt ſhew that the *Church* has *need* of ſuch an *Infallibillity* as He pretends to: Which is a Point that this Gentleman knows we deny, and are pretty confident that He will never be able to prove.

That all *neceſſary Truth* ſhall ſomewhere or Other be taught in the *Church*, we confeſs; becauſe otherwiſe the *Church* its ſelf muſt *fail*; which, by the promiſe of Chriſt, we are ſure it ſhall not do. But in what part of *the Catholick Church* this truth ſhall continue; Whether in the *Eaſt*, or in the *Weſt*; Among the *Paſtors*, or Among the *People*; *Free* from *Error*, or *Mixed* with it; We cannot tell; Nor is there any ſufficient Evidence from *any*, or *all* theſe *Paſſages* of *Scripture*, to determine.

In the mean time, I muſt obſerve from this laſt Text; That in order to any *Perſons*, or *Churches*, having the *Spirit* of *Truth*; Two things are Required. 1*ſt*. They *muſt love God, and keep his Commandments*. And 2*dly*. They muſt not be *Worldly-minded*; for ſuch *cannot Receive* him. And therefore, tho' we are not able preciſely to ſay, *To whom*, or *How far*, God will now *Give* his *Spirit*; Yet where we ſee any *Church* generally carrying on *Worldly Intereſts* and *Deſigns*, under the *Colour* of *Religion*; and openly *Teaching*, and *Doing*, ſuch things as are contrary to the *Love of God*, and the *Obedience* of his *Commandments*; We may venture to Conclude, That that *Church* has, of all Others, the leaſt Pretence to *God's Spirit*: And what that *Church* is, to which, of all the *Churches* of the *World*, theſe

theſe *Notes* the beſt Agree, I ſhall leave it to *this* Gentleman, who has furniſh'd me with theſe *Remarks*, to Conſider.

Let. P. 2.] 7thly. "*My Reaſon, furthermore,* "*convinc'd Me: That by Vertue of this* Preſence "*of Chriſt, and* Aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit, *thus* "*promiſed* even to the End of the World; *This* "*Church is, and ſhall be always* One, *and the ſame:* "(Joh. x. ver. 16. Eph. iv. ver. 5.) *Spotleſs, Un-* "*defiled, Incorrupted,* (Eph. v. ver. 25.) *Invaria-* "*ble, and conſequently Un-reformable in her Faith,* "*and Doctrine, as to Theſe Articles.*

8thly. "*My Reaſon in like manner convinc'd Me:* "*That this Church is, and muſt be Univerſally ſpread* "throughout all Places (*Iſa.* xlix. ver. 6.) *and* "*Viſibly continued in an uninterrupted Succeſſion* "*of Paſtors and People, united in the ſame Faith,* "*Sacraments, and Subordination of Government* "throughout All Ages, *Iſa.* lix. ver. 21. (*on account* "*of which two properties, ſhe is call'd Catholick, or* "*Univerſal.*) *To the End, all People, of all Places,* "*and in all Times, whether Learned, or Unlearned,* "*may ſecurely approach unto the Blood and Paſſion of* "*Chriſt, and ſave their Souls by a Right Faith.*

From the *Authority* of his pretended Catholick Church to *Guide* Us, and the *Obligation* which he would perſwade Us, lies upon every Chriſtian to ſubmit to her direction; we come now to ſome of the Main *Notes*, and *Characters* of it. And all of which tho' we deny to that *Church* which he calls *Catholick*; yet to the *truly Catholick Church* we readily Own that moſt of Them do belong.

We believe that the *Catholick*, or *Univerſal Church* of *Chriſt*, is *One:* Nor is it poſſible for it to be more. For by the *Catholick Church*, in

the Propriety of that Expreſſion; we mean the General Collection of all ſuch *Particular Churches*, and *Aſſemblies*, as from the time of *Chriſt*'s *Aſcenſion* have, or ever hereafter ſhall embrace, *the Faith of Chriſt*; and make a right Profeſſion of it in all thoſe *Neceſſary*, and *Fundamental Articles*, which our *Saviour* has taught Us to *believe* and *confeſs*, in Order to our *Salvation*.

We believe this *Church* to be *Holy*: It was the *Deſign* of *Chriſt*, when He *died*, to have it ſo: It is the *Duty* of this *Church*, and of every particular Member of it, to Endeavour to become ſo: *Chriſt* has furniſhed it with all things *Neceſſary* in *Order* to this *End*: And He will hereafter *Actually* make it ſo; when he ſhall gather this *Catholick Church* together into *One Communion*, and *Fellowſhip*, in *Heaven*.

But that this *Univerſal Church*, or indeed any *Conſiderable part* of it, is any more perfectly *Pure* from *all kind* of *Error*, at the preſent, than it is from *all kind* of *Sin*, We do not believe, nor does his *Text* at all prove it ſo to be. It ſpeaks of *Purity* of *Manners*, not of *Soundneſs* of *Doctrine*: And how *Invariable*, and *Unreformable ſoever*, He may think the *Roman-Church* to be in her *Faith*, and *Doctrine*; I am confident He will not venture to ſay, that ſhe is *Spotleſs*, and *Undefiled*, in the *Lives* and *Actions* of all Her *Members*.

As for the laſt *Note* mention'd by Him, that this *Church* is to be *Univerſally ſpread* throughout *All places*, *as well as* to *continue throughout All Ages*; We do not deny but that the *Chriſtian Religion* has a *Right* to be *Received Every where*. There is no Nation of the Earth excluded from the *Saving Promiſes* of it. And we ought with

Thank-

Thankfulneſs to acknowledge that it is ſpread into the Remoteſt Countries of the World. Whether it ſhall always continue *actually* to *Enjoy* ſuch an *Amplitude* of *Place*, we cannot tell; Nor does his Paſſage from *Iſaiah* in the leaſt prove that it ſhall,

And now We begin to draw towards an End of this long *Argument*; and to ſee, Whether it is that all theſe *Notable Reaſons* tend. And that I may give all the force I can to his *Deductions*, I will briefly ſet them in their *clear*, and *full* Strength. The *Argument*, if I underſtand it, is this.

* It is neceſſary for every Chriſtian to *believe* whatſoever God has *Revealed*, and *Required* Us to *believe*, in Order to *Our Salvation.*

* To this End, it was neceſſary that God ſhould have provided a *ſufficient Means* for our *Knowledge* of, and *Aſſurance* in, thoſe *things* which he has ſo *Revealed*; and does ſo *Require* of Us to *Believe.*

* The Holy Scriptures, *Read*, and *Interpreted* by every *Private Perſon*, are not a *ſufficient means* to *Inform* Us *certainly* in theſe *Matters.*

* The *Catholick-Church*, alone is ſuch a *ſufficient means*; and alone is Capable of *Guiding* Us in *Matters of Faith.*

* To this *Church* Chriſt has promiſed an *Infallible aſſiſtance* for the doing of this; and commanded all *Chriſtians* to *ſubmit to her Conduct.*

* The *Notes* of this *Church*, deliver'd in *Holy Scripture*, are *Unity*; *Holineſs*; *Univerſality* of *Time*, and *Place*:

* Theſe *Notes* agree only to the *Church* of *Rome*:

* Therefore, the *Church* of *Rome* is that *Catholick Church*, which alone has the *Right* to *Guide* Us, and to which we are *Commanded* by *God* to *ſubmit.*

This

This is the *Argument* which I ſuppoſe this Gentleman aim'd at; tho' by his odd way of putting of it together, I very much queſtion whether He himſelf underſtood it. What account we are to make of the *Premiſes of it*, I have already ſhewn: Let us now ſee what *Strength* there is in the *Concluſion*.

Let. P. 2.] "Laſtly, *My Reaſon clearly convinced me; This Church thus Endued and Qualified, can be none but the* Roman-Catholick. *For the* Church *of* England, (*and the ſame may be ſaid of the* Presbyterians, Anabaptiſts, *or Other* Diſſenters) *as to thoſe main Points or Matters where-in ſhe now ſtands ſeparated from the* Roman-Catholick, *had no Viſible Exiſtence, or Being, upon the face of the Earth, immediately before the time of King* Edward *the Sixth, and Queen* Elizabeth. *Thus much all our Records, Hiſtories, and very Laws, univerſally atteſt, aud is as undeniable, as that there was ſuch a Perſon as Queen* Elizabeth, *or any thing elſe in thoſe days; The whole Chriſtian World (exeept ſuch as Proteſtants themſelves acknowledge to be Hereticks) immediately before that time, unanimouſly believing and Profeſſing no Other than the* Roman-Catholick *Faith and Worſhip. Wherefore either there was immediately before the pretended Reformation, no where Extant any* Catholick-Church *at all; And then the Article of our Creed,* I believe the Holy Catholick Church, *was loſt and aboliſh'd; Or if there were, it can be no Other than what at that time was, and ſtill is term'd* Roman-Catholick: *(the Word* Roman *being annex'd to the Word* Catholick, *only to expreſs the Churches Unity under one Head, and ſo to diſtinguiſh her from Sectaries diſjoynted from her Communion.)*

Which

Which long Diſcourſe, if I take it aright, amounts to this; Neither the *Church* of *England*, nor the *Presbyterians*, *Anabaptiſts*, or Other *Diſſenters*, are the *Catholick-Church*; becauſe theſe, conſidered as differing from the *Romiſh-Church*, had no Exiſtence before the *time* of the *Reformation*. Either therefore we muſt ſay, that Chriſt had no *Catholick-Church* at the time of the *Reformation*; or we muſt grant the *Church* of *Rome* to be that *Catholick-Church*, to which all the ſeveral *Powers*, *Offices*, and *Privileges*, before mentioned are to be applied.

And now let His Heretical Uncle ſay if He can, whether his *Nephew* has not Profited ſince his leaving of Us, *and not changed his Religion Otherwiſe than with juſt Reaſon, and with ſufficient mature deliberation*, P. 3. This is indeed a deadly Stab, and no doubt (in his Conceit) ſtrikes to the very Heart of the *Proteſtant Cauſe*. Chriſt had always a *Catholick Church* upon *Earth*: Before the *Reformation* there was no *Proteſtant-Church* properly ſo called, And therefore the *Proteſtants*, cannot be the *Catholick-Church*.

Well, let us then diſmiſs them, as utterly undone: And conclude once for all, that neither *Any*, nor *All* the *Proteſtant-Churches* in the World, are *Chriſt's Catholick-Church*. What will follow; Why either that *Chriſt* had no *Catholick-Church* before the *Reformation*; Or if He had, the *Church* of *Rome* was that *Church*.

That Chriſt, ever ſince he left the World, has had, and will always continue to have a *Catholick-Church*, we freely acknowledge. But why muſt the *Church* of *Rome* needs have been the *Catholick-Church* before the *Reformation?* Were there no Other *Churches* beſides in thoſe Days,

Days, in the World? What does this Gentleman think of the *Greek-Church?* What of thoſe large *Churches* then extant, and ſtill continuing, in the ſeveral parts of *Aſia*, and *Africa*; in many things different from, and in none Subject to, the *Authority*, and *Head-ſhip*, of the *Biſhop* of *Rome?* If theſe were true *Churches* of *Chriſt*, the *Church* of *Rome* was not the Only *Church* at that time in the World. If not the *Only*, then not the *Whole*: And if not the *Whole*, then not the *Catholick-Church*; as we now take that Expreſſion.

But what if I ſhould ſay, that the *Church* of *Rome* before the *Reformation* (like the *Church* of *Jeruſalem* at the beginning of *Chriſtianity*) might have been the *Catholick-Church*, and yet not be ſo *Now*. The *Church* of *Chriſt* is in a continual Flux: Sometimes *more Extended*, and ſometimes *leſs*. Let us put the Caſe, that we of this Kingdom had been altogether *Pagans* before the *Reformation*; but about that time had been *Converted* to *Chriſtianity*. In this caſe 'tis plain, that what was the *Catholick-Church* before our *Converſion*, would *not* have been *ſo After:* Becauſe, from thenceforth, we ſhould have become a part of it; and that is not the *Whole*, to which any *Part* is wanting.

There are therefore, in this Concluſion, theſe two Inconveniencies at the leaſt; 1*ſt*. That it is *Falſe:* For the *Roman-Church* was not the *Catholick-Church* before the *Reformation*. And, 2*dly*. That it is *Inconſequent*: Becauſe, It might have been the *Catholick-Church* before the *Reformation*, and yet not be ſo *Now*.

But, indeed, theſe are not the *Anſwers*, that I would chiefly inſiſt upon, with Reference to this

this *Concluſion.* The *Church* of *Rome* before the *Reformation* was a *part* of *Chriſts Catholick-Church*, tho' a very *Corrupt* One: The *Church* of *England* was, in like manner, a *part* of the ſame *Catholick-Church*, but *Corrupted* too. By *Reforming* its *Corruptions* (and which were at that time generally ſpread over all the *Weſtern Churches*) we changed not our *Religion*, but freed it of thoſe *Errors* that were crept into it: Nor did we depart from the *Communion* of Any *Other Church*, (no not from that of the *Church* of *Rome* its ſelf,) as far as it was truely a *part* of *Chriſt's Catholick Church*; but only in ſuch things wherein They had *departed* from the *Right Faith*, and *Doctrine*, of it.

Our *Saviour* in St. *Matthew* compares his *Church* to a *Field* of *Corn*: The *Field* was *Sown* with *Good Seed*, but whilſt Men ſlept, an *Enemy* came and ſowed *Tares* in it. In proceſs of Time, as the *Corn* grew up, the *Tares* began to appear together with it. Let us now ſuppoſe that this *field* being under the Care of ſeveral Stewards, ſome of them ſhould ſend forth their Servants carefully to pluck up the *Tares* in *Their* part of it; but to leave the *Good Corn* ſtill ſtanding as it was before. Would the Cleanſing of that *part* of the *field* make it ever the leſs a *part* of the ſame *field* of *Corn* than it was before? Or would not any One think that Man Mad who ſhould undertake to maintain, that the *Other* part of the *field*, which Remained *Un-weeded*, was not only the *beſt Part*, but the *whole field of Corn.*

This is the Caſe in the preſent Debate. The *Catholick-Church* is the *field*: The *Good ſeed* is the *true Doctrine of Chriſt*; which *Himſelf*, and his *Apoſtles*, firſt *Sowed*: The *Tares*, are thoſe *Errors*

and

and *Corruptions*, which our *Enemy* the *Devil*, ſecretly Sowed in it. By the Grace of God, and the Care, and Diligence, of ſome Wiſe and Good Men, Raiſed up by Him for this Work; theſe *Errors* and *Corruptions* were carefully Weeded out of one Half of theſe *Weſtern Churches*; yet ſo as to leave the *Good Corn* ſtill ſtanding; the *true Doctrine* of *Chriſt*, remaining as it was from the Beginning. And all the difference between the Preſent State of thoſe *Churches*, and their Condition before the *Reformation*, is only this; That whereas before, they were all Equally over-run with *Tares*; now, in the *Reform'd Churches*, the *Tares* are *Weeded* up, and the *Good Corn* is left to Flouriſh the better without Them.

Which Being the Caſe, it is plain that all theſe *particular Churches*, whether *Reformed*, or not *Reformed*, are ſtill (as they ever were) *Parts* of the ſame *Catholick*, or *Univerſal Church*: Only with this difference; that in the *Reformed*, the *true Doctrine* and *Faith* of *Chriſt* is taught without any mixture of *Errors* and *Corruptions* to Choak it; in the Others, it is taught with the ſame mixture of *Error* and *Corruption*, in which they were All of them involved, before the *Reformation*.

I conclude then, that the *Roman-Church* neither *Now* is, nor *Ever was*, the *Univerſal Church* of *Chriſt*; becauſe it neither *Now* is, nor *Ever was*, the *Only Church* of *Chriſt* upon Earth: And that cannot be the *Whole Church*, beſides which there are Other *Parts* Requiſite to make up the *Whole*.

And this may ſuffice in Anſwer to this long and formal deduction: In which the *Premiſes* are moſt of them utter *Miſtakes*; and were they all

all true, yet the Concluſion from them, in favour of the *Church* of *Rome*, would be altogether Inconſequent. I ſhall only take notice before I diſmiſs this part of His *Letter*, what ſtreſs this Gentleman all along lays upon his *Own Reaſon*. *My Reaſon* (ſays he) *convinc'd Me: My Reaſon alſo convinc'd Me: My Reaſon moreover convinc'd Me: My Reaſon furthermore convinc'd Me: My Reaſon in like manner convinc'd Me:* And, *Laſtly, My Reaſon clearly convinc'd Me.*

Now this *Reaſon*, to which he pays ſo great a Difference, was the *Private Reaſon* of a Man yet on the way; neither Arrived to, nor Aſſiſted by, the only ſure Guidance of the *Churches Infallibility.*

And what does this *Reaſon* do? Why it not only *States Queſtions*; *Draws Concluſions*; *Rejects Opinions*; and that in ſome of the moſt Obſcure Subjects of Religion: But it moreover *Interprets Scripture*; Sits Judge over the *Notes*, *Priviledges*, and *Authority* of the *Catholick-Church*; Determines *theſe*, and *theſe*, to be the certain *Marks* of it; Such and ſuch *Promiſes* to *belong* to it; Such certain *Powers* to be *Veſted* in it; and, in fine, ſuffices to carry off this Wiſe and Cautious, Gentleman, from the Communion of the *Church*, in which He had been *Educated*, into *Another*; and that for this main Reaſon, becauſe that our Own *Private Reaſon*, (tho' informed and enlightned by the *Word* of *God*) *is not to be Rely'd upon in Matters of Religion*, nor is there any way of coming to any *Certainty* of *Faith* by it.

Here therefore I would ask, not this *New Convert*, but thoſe who are his *Guides*, to deal freely with Us; and ſay whether in this procedure, he is to be juſtified, or not. If they will juſti-

fie

ſie Him; then they muſt grant, that a Man may have a ſufficient *Certainty* in Matters of *Religion*, from his *Own Reaſon*, Guided, and Enlightned by the *Holy Scriptures*. Nay more; that every Man ought to *Uſe* his *Own Reaſon* in judging of his *Religion*; and to follow the laſt *Reſolution* of it.

Now whether theſe be *Principles* allow'd of by the *Roman-Church*, I would deſire them to Inform Us. If they be; then, God be thanked, we are ſafe enough in our *Rule of Faith*; and need not go to *Rome* for an *Infallible Guide*. We have the *Word* of *God* to direct Us; and we have *Private Reaſon*, I dare ſay, as Good as any of theirs, to Underſtand it by. And if we carefully make Uſe of it, 'tis (after all) agreed, that we may ſecurely depend upon it.

But if to avoid this danger they ſhall ſtill deny (as they are wont to do) that a Man can have any *ſufficient Certainty* on which to determine Himſelf in *Matters* of *Religion*, by his *Own Private Reaſon*; then let them Correct the Forwardneſs, and abate the Confidence, of this Gentleman, in valuing himſelf, as he does; and in laying ſo great a ſtreſs, as 'tis Evident He has done, on ſuch a *Guide*, As they *believe*, and *himſelf confeſſes* P. 2. *may lead him into Deluſions and Fallacies, and that in the moſt neceſſary Articles of Faith.* And teach him to Reduce his Vainboaſting, to this Modeſt, and Catholick-Concluſion; (which is all his *Own Principles* will admit of) That he has followed his *Own Reaſon* in this *Change*, as well as he could; But whether he has been miſtaken, or not, in his New Choice, He cannot tell: Becauſe, to ſay the truth, he looks upon his *Private Reaſon* to be a

very

very *Uncertain* and *Fallacious Guide*; which has *led Thouſands* into *Deluſions*, and *Errors*: And may, for ought he knows, have, in this very Change, deceived himſelf among the Reſt.

This is all, that upon his *Own Principles* he can ſay for himſelf: And whether this be ſufficient to juſtify any Man in parting not only with his *Religion*, but with his *Own Reaſon*, and the *Word of God* too; I ſhall leave it to the *Impartial* Cenſure of Mankind to *Judge*.

And thus have I done with all that part of his *Letter* which pretends to any thing of *Argument*; and might therefore ſtop here, and leave the reſt without any farther Reply. But to prevent any vain ſurmiſes, (which thoſe of that Religion are wont to abound with) as if there were ſomewhat in it not to be Anſwer'd; I ſhall go on to make a few *Reflections* upon it.

Let. p. 3.] "*Thus, by what I have here Writ, tho'* "*as briefly as I could, I hope you will be inclined to* "*believe, I have not changed my* Religion *Otherwiſe* "*than with juſt Reaſon, and upon ſufficiently mature de-* "*liberation*; *and accordingly will abate ſomething of* "*your former Rigour and Severity towards me*: *Which* "Club-Law, (*if I may preſume to term it ſo*) *nei-* "*ther convinceth my Judgment, nor taſts much of the* "*Meek and Sweet Spirit of the* Goſpel. *You know very* "*well, I could expect no Temporal advantage by this* "*Change. The only Motives I have, or could have,* "*to be, and remain a* Roman Catholick, *are*; *Be-* "*cauſe the* Roman Catholick Church *alone is the true* "Church *of* God: *Becauſe I will Obey the Command* "*of* Chriſt *in hearing the* Church, (Mat. xviii. Ver. "17.) *leſt I be Cegarded by him, as an* Heathen, *or* "*a* Publican; *Becauſe I will not Endanger the* "*loſs of my Soul for want of a right Faith*; *Becauſe I*

" *will not Interpret the Scriptures my ſelf, contrary to* " *the Senſe given of it by the* Catholick-Church, *up-* " *on whoſe Authority I believe the Scriptures to be* God's " *Word*; *Nor will follow the Interpretation of Others* " *who have forſaken this* Churches *Faith and Commu-* " *nion*; *but will learn the meaning of the* Word *of* God, " *and all other* Chriſtian Myſteries *from the* Church " *of* God, *which to that End hath the Promiſed Spi-* " *rit of* God *to Guide her.* Laſtly; *Becauſe I will* " *partake of the Sacraments of* Chriſt, *and reap the* " *Sweet Graces and Bleſſings imparted alone to the Re-* " *conciled and Living Members of* Chriſt *in the Unity* " *of his* Church, *that ſo by his Paſſion and Merits, I* " *may (whatſoever I ſuffer here on Earth) at length at-* " *tain to Eternal Happineſs.*

In all this long Paragraph there is little more than a brief Re-capitulation of what he had before Alledged, and to that the Anſwer already given may ſuffice. As for the *Club-Law*, of which he ſpeaks, he certainly makes a very juſt Reflection upon it. *It is neither fit to Convince any Man's judgment, nor does much ſavour of the Meek and Sweet Spirit of the Goſpel.* And therefore is, upon both theſe accounts, worthily to be Condemned in Matters of Religion. But what then will he ſay to the Barbarous *Perſecutions* of thoſe of the *Reformed Church*, in ſuch places where *Popery* has the upper hand, and is able to ſhew it ſelf in its true Principles and Practices? What will he ſay to that ſtanding Court of Cruelty, the *Inquiſition?* To the ſufferings of the Proteſtants in *Hungary*, *France*, *Piemont*; and indeed, wherever it has layn in their Power to Deſtroy them? What will he ſay to the Proceedings of our Own Princes from the time of King *Henry* the *4th.* but eſpecially in their Glorious time of *Fire* and *Fagot*, under the ſhort Reign of Queen

Queen *Mary?* Here I hope there was *Club-Law* with a Witneſs. And to this their Principles, and, I doubt, their Inclinations too, ſtill lead them. So that of all Men living, thoſe of the *Church* of *Rome*, as They have given the moſt Scandalous Example of *Perſecution* upon the account of Religion; ſo have they the leaſt Cauſe to Complain of it. For my Own part, I thank God, I abhor all ſuch *Principles* and *Practices*; and do hope I ſhall never approach ſo near to *Popery*, as to give my Conſent to them. If, indeed, the Government finds it neceſſary to Reſtrain ſome Men whoſe Principles and Intereſts are, upon a *Civil Account*, apparently dangerous to it; 'tis not for me to paſs any Cenſures upon it. On the Contrary, I think, 'tis a duty which Our Rulers Owe both to *God*, and their *Country*, to take care of the *Religion* and *Liberties* of their People. But as this they may do without any *Perſecution* for *Matters* of *Faith*, ſo I hope they will always continue to Act accordingly: And give a Publick Example of that *Charity* of the *Goſpel* which Requires Us to *Love our very Enemies*; And to *Do Good to thoſe who Hate Us*, and I am ſenſible, if they were able, would *Deſtroy* us from off the face of the Earth.

In the cloſe of this *Paragraph* we have a Caſt of his Charity, which his new *Church* will not altogether approve of: As if the *Graces*, and *Bleſſings of the Sacraments*, were only to be had in the *Romiſh Communion*. As to *One* of the *Sacraments*, that of *Baptiſm*, themſelves deny it not to be as *Effectual* with *Us*, as it is with *Them*. And for the Other, that of the *Lords Supper*, we have thus much Reaſon to hope it may be more ſo; in that we follow the *Inſtitution of Chriſt* in *Adminiſtring*, and *Receiving*, of it, from whence They cannot deny themſelves

to have (*dangerously* as well as *presumptuously*) departed.

Let. p. 3.] "*You are pleased to tell Me in your Letter; I ought to have admitted of a Personal Dispute, or Congress between a Popish Priest, and a Protestant Minister, before I left the Religion wherein I had been all my Life instructed and bred: And you amplifie upon the Point, by an additional Clause, Saying; The Priests when Challenged, dare not Venture upon a Personal Congress, with an able Divine of the Church of* England, *for fear of betraying their own Ignorance, and the Rottenness of their Cause. Give me leave briefly to Answer.* First, *If my former Religion was not true, I ought not to persist in it, because I was brought up in it; Nevertheless, I did not leave the Old Religion for a New, but returned to the Old, from whence I was convinced, the New had unlawfully departed.* 2ly, *As for the Congress you mention between a Popish Priest, and a Protestant Minister; It might be a ready Way to hang the Priest, and shock the Government, but not to alter my Judgment; for I shall never pin my Faith, and hazard my Salvation, upon the Wit, Learning, or Eloquence, of any particular Person, whether Priest or Minister; No nor upon any thing that can deceive or mislead Me. Christ Jesus in his Infinite Mercy, Wisdom, and Goodness, hath provided and ordained for me (and all Others who truly seek him) a safe and secure* Guide *to* instruct *me,* (Luc. x. Vers. 16. Eph. iv. Vers. 11, &c.) *A* light *to* direct *me,* (Mat. v. Vers. 14. Isa. xlix. Vers. 6.) *A* Judge *to determine* Controversies, (Mat. xviii. Vers. 17. Deut. xvii. Vers. 8.) *A* Rock *to support me,* (Mat. xvi. Vers. 18. Isa. ii. Ver. 2, &c.) *This Guide, this Light, this Judge, this Rock, is the Holy Catholick Church, authorized by Christ to Teach me, and (as I have declared before*

"pre-

" preſerved *by the promiſed* Aſſiſtance of the Holy " Ghoſt (Jo. xiv. Verſ. 16, and 26.) *from all dan-* " *ger of miſleading, and deluding Me. This therefore* " *is that* High Way, called the way of Holineſs, " Iſa. xxxv. Verſ. 8.) ſo plain and direct, that the " Way-faring Men tho' Fools, ſhall not Err there- " in. *Why then ſhould not I acquieſce to the Doctrine of* " *the* Catholick Church, *inſtituted by Chriſt for my* " *Guide, and accordingly termed by the Apoſtle,* (1 Tim. " iii. Verſ. 15.) the Pillar and Ground of Truth? " *And why having found this Church, and thereby ren-* " *dred entirely free and clear of all Doubts, ſhould I be* " *condemned as Obſtinate, Wilful, and Diſobedient,* " *for refuſing to embroil my ſelf or Others any more, in* " *endleſs and fruitleſs Conferences, Diſputes, and A-* " *muſements, managed uſually with Paſſion, Partiality,* " *and Prejudice, about matters of Faith, of which I* " *am already fully ſatisfied? Was it neceſſary in the Pri-* " *mitive Times, there ſhould have been a Perſonal Con-* " *greſs and Diſpute, between an Apoſtle, and a Scribe* " *or Phariſee, before any Convert could rationally embrace* " *the Chriſtian Religion? Surely No. And here I can-* " *not paſs by your additional Clauſe, without remarking* " *unto you, That an Imputation of Ignorance, and* " *Rottenneſs of their Cauſe in Roman Catholick Prieſts,* " *if at any time, when challenged, they Refuſe a Publick* " *and Perſonal Congreſs, is a Prooffleſs* Bravado *in the* " *Miniſters of the Church of* England, *who having by* " *Penal and Sanguinary Laws gain'd the Whip-hand of* " *their Antagoniſt, Crow as it were, upon their Own* " *Dunghill.*

If this Diſcourſe be *Hiſtory*, not *Fiction*, it ſhews us that thoſe of the *Romiſh-Church* ſtill purſue their Old Method, of *Stealing*, rather than *Convincing Proſelytes*. The practice may be Uſeful, as, indeed,

'tis neceſſary; but yet has as little of Honour, as of Reaſon, or Juſtice in it.

The *Queſtion*, to be reſolved is this, Why this Gentleman Chang'd his *Religion*, without hearing what ſome Able Perſon of his *Own Church* had to ſay, in Anſwer to the *Prieſts* Objections againſt it?

To this his firſt *Reply* is, That *he did not leave the Old Religion for a New, but return'd to the Old, from whence he was convinced the New had Unlawfully departed.*

In Anſwer to which I muſt, in the firſt place, put this Gentleman in mind, that as to the Main *Articles* of our *Faith* we both *Agree*; and therefore ſo far I preſume our *Religion* may be both of an *Age*. As to the Points in which we *differ*; it will then be Reaſonable for him to call the *Romiſh* the *Old Religion*, when He can ſhew thoſe things which we have Rejected, to have been delivered by our *Saviour*, or his *Apoſtles*, to the *Church*. In the mean time, He knows 'tis for this very Cauſe that we Reject Them, becauſe we look upon Them as *Innovations* upon the *Old Religion* of *Chriſt*; and not only not to have been taught by Him, but to be utterly Inconſiſtent with many of thoſe *Doctrines*, which both They, and We, allow to have been from the *Beginning*.

But be the *Religion* which He has left *New* or *Old*; Why did he go off from it, without Conſulting with ſome Learned Men of his *Own Communion* about it? He tells us; *Becauſe he was convinced that we had departed Unlawfully from the Roman-Church.* But this ſtill brings us to the ſame queſtion; Whether he was not *miſtaken* in his *Opinion?* And whether had He adviſed with ſome Wiſer Men than himſelf, they might not have *convinced* him that he was ſo? So that this is no Reaſon at all. Let us ſee if the next be any better.

Now

Now that is, 2*dly*. That to have had a meeting between a *Proteſtant Miniſter*, and a *Popiſh Prieſt*, would have *offended* the *Government*, and endangered the poor *Prieſts* Neck; And that without any *Profit* to himſelf by it.

How Modeſt, and Cautious are theſe Gentlemen, on a ſudden, become? How *fearful* of the *Laws?* How unwilling to *offend* the *Government?* But does this Great Maſter of Reaſon take Us, in Good Earneſt, to be ſo blind, as not to ſee through this Pretence? When in *deſpight*, I had almoſt ſaid in *Defiance*, of thoſe *Penal*, and *Sanguinary* Laws of which He ſpeaks, we ſee the *Romiſh Prieſts* walking openly in our Streets; And not only *Exerciſing* the moſt forbidden *Offices* of their *Own Religion*, but *Practiſing* oftentimes on thoſe of Our *Communion:* And in all which they Equally both *Affront* the *Government*, and *Expoſe themſelves*, as they could do by ſuch a *Congreſs* with us: He muſt be very willing to be deceived, who can believe that there is not ſome Other, more prevailing *Reaſon*, at the bottom, which cauſes them with ſo much obſtinacy to decline All *Meetings* with the *Learned Men* of our ſide, than any of thoſe which this Gentleman would impoſe upon Us.

For, give me leave freely to ask, in Our Own Juſtification; When was any *Prieſt*, I do not ſay *hang'd*, but *call'd in queſtion*, for ſuch a *Meeting?* What *Proteſtant Miniſter* was ever known, in ſuch a Caſe, to have betrayed his *Adverſary*; That we ſhould be charged by Him, as *Crowing upon our Own Dunghill?*

Or if this be not yet enough; let me ak him farther: Why were they ſo backward to meet with us under the late *Government?* What *Laws* were they then *afraid* of? What *Government* would then have

been *Affronted* by it? But alas! *Popery* is a *Religion* that cannot be maintain'd, when it meets with a knowing Antagoniſt. And this, I very much fear, they are *Themſelves Aware* of; How confidently ſoever they may talk to their *Credulous Proſelytes*, of their *Church*, and their *Infallibility*: And, in this Gentlemans Phraſe, *Crow* Themſelves *upon their own Dunghill.*

What elſe can be the Reaſon why in making of *Converts*, they hardly ever ſet upon a Man of *Learning* and *Integrity*: But like thoſe heretofore, *Creep ſecretly into Houſes, leading captive ſilly Women*, 2 Tim. iii. 6. Who neither know what their *Religion* is, *nor why* they *go off* from it. That it would be much more *Reputable* to *Themſelves*, and more *Advantageous* to their *Cauſe*, to carry off our Men of *Learning* and *Character* from us, is certain; and they are neither ſo blind as not to ſee it; nor ſo Humble and diſintereſted, as not to deſire it. One ſuch *Convert* would ſtagger Hundreds, and might probably carry off many Others with him. But to Pickeer up and down among the *Meaneſt* of the People: To Attack thoſe of the Weakeſt Capacities; Or if at any time they chance to go farther, to ſpend their Proweſs on ſuch whoſe Intereſts and Circumſtances lead them rather to *ſeek a change*, than to *Stand* an *Aſſault*; this is plainly to ſhew us, that they are ſenſible of their Own weakneſs; and that *Popery* is a *Religion* which nothing but a *Great prejudice*, a *Great weakneſs*, or a *Great Intereſt*, can either *keep* Men in, or enable them to *draw* them over to.

But this Gentleman cannot find out what need there was of any ſuch trouble either to himſelf, or to his Prieſt: *Seeing for his part he is reſolved never to pin his Faith, or hazard his Salvation, upon the Wit, Learning, or Eloquence, of any particular Perſon, whether*

Prieſt

Prieſt or Miniſter. But whom then will He be taught by? His *Own Reaſon* he has *Renounc'd: Scripture* he has *laid aſide:* And now he *diſcards* all *Private Perſons*, whether *Prieſts*, or *Miniſters.* I do not ſee, that any thing leſs than a *General Council* is to have the Honour of *Inſtructing* Him. The *Church*, he ſays, is his *Guide*, *Light*, *Rock*, and *Judge*: And that not any *Church* neither; No, The *Church-Catholick*, that or nothing ſhall direct him.

Well; let him have his Will: But pray how does He expect the *Church Catholick* ſhould *Guide* him? By its *Definitions?* No, by no means: For thoſe are *Written things*, and muſt be *Interpreted* by *Private Reaſon*; and of that He tells us We can have no ſecurity. For even the *Word of God, if Interpreted by Private Reaſon, may deceive Us, and that in the moſt neceſſary Articles of Faith.* Letter. P. 2.

Or ſhall ſhe Conduct him by her *Prieſts?* Not ſo neither: For *Prieſts* are *Men*, and *Men* are *Fallible:* And he will not pin his *Faith* on the *Wit*, or *Learning*, of a *Prieſt*, any more than of a *Miniſter.*

But how then will he be taught? The *Catholick Church* cannot ſpeak to him; Or if it could, her *Speech* would be but *Words*; and the *ſenſe* of *Words* muſt be *Interpreted* by *Private Reaſon*; And his *Reaſon* may deceive him as well in the *Interpretation* of what He *Hears*, as of what He *Reads.*

For my part, I muſt freely Own, I am here at a ſtand; andmuſt intreat him (if it be not too great a Secret) to let me know how Men are taught by the *Roman-Catholick-Church* without either *Words*, or *Writing.* For in good earneſt, I begin to doubt, that all this pretence of the *Churches Guidance* has nothing at laſt in it; but is a meer *Notion*, *a Speculative Infallibility*, that is never to be Reduced to *Practice.*

If

If in this I am miſtaken, He will have the eaſier Work to ſet me right: By ſhewing me, 1*ſt*. What that *Church* is, which is to *Guide* Us? 2*dly*. How this *Church* delivers its *Senſe* to its *Members*? And 3*dly*. How they come to be *Infallibly Certain* that they do not miſtake the *Senſe* of it?

Theſe *Three Things* being Clearly Stated, and Evidently Proved; by the *Light* of *Reaſon*, or the *Authority* of *Divine Revelation*; Or (which would be more agreeable to their *Own Principles*) by the *Teſtimony* of *Miracles*, would go a great way towards my Converſion. Till then I ſhall ſtill be apt to think, as I have hitherto done, that the *Holy Scripture* is capable of giving Me as right an Information in *Matters* of *Faith*, as any Other Writing of *Leſſer Authority*: And that I am as capable of Underſtanding what is plainly deliver'd by the *Holy Ghoſt* in *Scripture*, as what is plainly deliver'd by the *Church* of *Rome*, in her *Canons*, and *Definitions*.

Let. P. 5.] "*But you ſay in your Letter, I ſhould at* "*leaſt have Read divers Proteſtant Books, and private-*"*ly conſulted divers Proteſtant Divines, before I aban-*"*don'd all the ſeveral* Proteſtant-Churches, *and* Reli-"gions *now Extant in* England. *Sir, I have read and* "*have heard of theſe ſeveral* Proteſtant Churches, *e-*"*nough to convince Me, none of Them are the True* "*Church of God; This Church being alone (as I have* "*ſhewn by its Marks* (viz.) *Unity, Viſibility, Univerſa-*"*lity, Indefectibility, Uninterrupted Succeſſion*, &c.) *the* "*Roman Catholick. And thoſe ſeveral Churches you* "*mention muſt firſt agree among Themſelves, what is,* "*and what not,* Orthodox, *before I, leaving the* Ro-"man Catholick, *can make a Poſitive Judgment,* "*When, Where, Or What to Reſolve upon. For why* "*ſhould not I become a* Presbyterian, *or* Anabaptiſt,

"*as*

" *as well as of the Church of* England? *And why not a* " Socinian, *or* Muggletonian, *as well as Either? How* " *can I (they all equally Arrogating and Pleading Scrip-* " *ture in their behalf) Sit Paramount Judge over Them?*

In the foregoing *Paragraph*, Our new Convert endeavour'd to give ſuch Reaſons as he could, why it was neither ſafe, nor expedient, for him to have had ſome meeting of a *Romiſh Prieſt*, with a *Proteſtant Miniſter*, in order to his better Information in the *Points* in difference between Us. He is now for ſhewing why he did not think fit to Adviſe with any *Proteſtant Divine* alone; nor ſo much as to *Read* any of our *Books*, before he left Us. And this plainly ſhews, what Thoſe of the *Other Communion* would be at: And that 'tis not their *Fear* of the *Laws*, much leſs any *Conſcience* that they make of *Offending* the *Government*, but ſome Other *Reaſon*, that (as I before ſaid) determines them to avoid all *Perſonal Conferences* with Us.

But however, let us hear his *Reaſon* for this: Why he ſays, He has Read enough to Convince him that none of our *Proteſtant-Churches* are the *True Church of God.* He is much in the Right: Nor is the *Church* of *Rome* any more ſo than They. But yet both Thoſe, and That, may, I hope, be *Parts* of the *True Church of God:* Only with this advantageous difference on our ſide; That Ours being *Reformed*, are much more *Pure*, and hold the *Truth* of the *Goſpel* in a much greater *Integrity*, than Theirs.

He adds, That the ſeveral *Proteſtant Churches* muſt firſt agree among Themſelves what is *Orthodox*, and what *Not*; before he leaving the *Roman-Catholick*, can make a poſitive Judgment, When Where, and What to Reſolve upon. For elſe He cannot tell, why he ſhould not become a *Presbyterian* or *Anabaptiſt*; nay, or a *Socinian*, or *Muggletonian*,

nian, as well as One of the *Church* of *England*.

This is his next *Argument*; and is One of the main Conſiderations by which they endeavour to prejudice our Cauſe, among Unlearned, and Unthinking Men. To ſhew them therefore what ſtrength it has, let us put it into the Mouth of a *Jew* or a *Turk*; and ſee how ſuch a One might manage it to as good purpoſe againſt our Common *Chriſtianity*, as they can do againſt the *Reform'd Religion*.

"You Chriſtians tell me, that forſaking the *Law* "of *Moſes*, (or the *Faith* of a *Muſſelman*) I muſt "become a Chriſtian, in order to my Salvation. "But before you can with any Reaſon ask me to do "this, you muſt firſt agree among your ſelves what "is *Orthodox*, and what not: Elſe how ſhall I know, "Whether I ought not to go into the Communion "of the *Church* of *England*, or to joyn with the "*Greek-Church*; Nay, how ſhall I know whether I "ought not to be a *Socinian*, or a *Quaker*, as well as "a *Roman-Catholick?* And how ſhall I be able to ſit "*Judge Paramount* over all theſe?

Let theſe Gentlemen conſider, whether this be not exactly their Own *Argument:* And whether it does not, in the conſequence of it, ſtrike at the *Truth* of *Chriſtianity*, with the ſame force that it does at the *Truth* of our *Reform'd Religion*. And when they ſhall have Reſolved how to Vindicate the *Goſpel* of *Chriſt* from this *Exception*; let them leave it to me, by the very ſame means, to take off all the force of it againſt Us.

In the mean time, let me tell this Gentleman, that amidſt all the *Pretended Differences* among the *Reformed* Churches, properly ſo call'd (for elſe, He may make *Jews*, and *Turks*, as much *Proteſtants*, as *Quakers*, *Socinians*, *Muggletonians*, and the like Rabble of *Hereticks*, deteſted by Us, as much as by

by themſelves) they all agree in *All* the *Neceſſary*, and *Fundamental Articles* of the *Chriſtian Faith*. And for the Reſt, they acknowledge the *Holy Scriptures* to be the *Word of God*; and leave every One to believe ſo, as after a diligent, and impartial Examination of thoſe *Sacred Writings*, they ſhall be perſwaded, it is their Duty to believe. And doing of this, We doubt not but that we ſhall either all come to the knowledge of the *Truth* in Them, or ſhall Run no *hazard* of our *Salvation*, if We do not.

And this is an Anſwer which I the Rather deſire this Gentleman to Conſider, becauſe we not only know the very ſame to be (after all) the Caſe of the *Church* of *Rome* its ſelf, but that he himſelf is forced, in a very few Lines, to confeſs it. For however they are *Guided*, and *Guarded*, (as he calls it) in *Matters* of *Faith*; yet (he Owns) they do differ in *Problematical* Opinions. I will not Quarrel about Words: Let him call their Differences as he pleaſes. This I affirm, and ſhall be ready, to make it Good, whenever he ſhall think fit to put it to an Iſſue; That They of the *Roman Church* are *Divided* among Themſelves in as many, and as conſiderable Points, as the *Reformed* are. And therefore if our *Diviſions* make ſo great a *Prejudice* againſt the Truth of our Religion; their *Diviſions* muſt make the ſame, againſt the Truth of Theirs: And then I cannot ſee that any body will Get by this *Objection* but the Common Enemy: Whom they have hereby furniſh'd with a *Heavy Prejudice*, and, (in their Opinion) with an Invincible Argument, againſt the Truth of Chriſtianity.

So careful are theſe Men of the Honour of God, and the Credit of the Goſpel: Or rather, ſo little do they mind how they manage themſelves, ſo they may but ſeem, by any means, to have ſomewhat to

ſay

ſay againſt Us. And yet how pleas'd is this poor Man, with this little ſhadow of an *Argument*? *How can I, they all Equally Arrogating and Pleading Scripture in their Behalf, Sit Paramount judge over them?* Sure this Gentleman has forgot, that he has already undertaken *to ſit Judg Paramount* in a much Weightier Matter than this. He has *judged* the *Scriptures* to be, of themſelves, *Inſufficient to Guide Us in Mattters of Faith.* He has judged that nothing but the *Church Catholick* has either Power, or Capacity, to do This. He has judged the *Notes* of this *Church*, to be *Unity*, *Univerſality*, *Viſibility*, and the Reſt mentioned in this very Paragraph. He has adjudg'd theſe *Notes* to belong only to the *Church* of *Rome*; and that the *Church* of *Rome* therefore is the *Catholick Church.* And yet now after all this, he wipes his Mouth, and looks demure, and with great Modeſty asks, How he ſhall judge a *Socinian* to be a *Heretick*; a *Quaker* to be an *Enthuſiaſt*; or *Muggleton* to have been mad?

Should I, in return, ask him, if We ſhould come over on his Perſwaſion to the *Church* of *Rome*, how we ſhould do *to ſit Paramount Judges* in thoſe *Problematical Queſtions*, which he confeſſes, They ſtill continue to *Differ* in: As for Example, in the Diſputes between the *Janſeniſts* and *Moliniſts*, about the buſineſs of *Grace*; Between the *Dominicans* and *Franciſcans*, in the Caſe of the *Immaculate Conception.* How we ſhould determine our ſelves in the great Points of the Churches *Authority*, and *Infallibility*: Whether we ſhould, with the *Italians*, hold for the *Perſon* of the *Pope?* Or with the *Papiſts* on this ſide the Mountains, ſtand up for a *General Council?* How we ſhould behave our ſelves, between the *Quietiſts* abroad, and the *Blackloiſts* at home; Whether we ſhould agree with the Fathers of the Society for the

Pope's

Pope's Temporal Power over Princes; Or with the Secular *Prieſts*, ſtand out againſt it. In ſhort, (to put many Heads into One) Whether we ſhould be *Old Papiſts* with their Ancient Schoolmen, and Controvertiſts? Or *New Papiſts*, with their Modern Expoſitors and Repreſenters? What Anſwer won'd he give me? The Church cannot help him: For that has either defined nothing at all, or nothing to any purpoſe, in theſe Caſes. *Reaſon* is *Uncertain*, *Scripture* is no leſs; And whither next he will ſend Us, I cannot tell. Perhaps he would make me a ſhort Reply, and tell me, That 'tis no great Matter which way moſt of theſe *Queſtions* are held: There is no danger in them, ſo long as Men menage their ſeveral Opinions with Piety and Charity. I like the Reſolution, and deſire him to take the ſame Anſwer from Us. Our Differences are in ſuch Points in which 'tis not neceſſary for Us to Agree: We may *Err* without *danger*, ſo long as we *Differ* with Humility; and do not prejudice either our Piety, or Charity, by it.

Let. P. 5.] "*Indeed we Catholicks, once rightly In-*
" *ſtructed and Grounded in our Religion, have as much*
" *Reaſon to decline the Reading of Books, and holding*
" *of private Debates, as We have to avoid Solemn Con-*
" *greſſes concerning Matters of Controverſie with Pro-*
" *teſtants. For ſeeing We can find Truth where alone*
" *it is,* (viz.) *in the Catholick Church, why ſhould*
" *we ſeek it where it is not? Let Thoſe who build their*
" *Faith upon their Fancy, or other ſandy Bottoms, ſpend*
" *their whole Life in Litigious Enquiries, as St.* Paul
" *in a moſt Exquiſite Manner deſcribes Them* (1 Tim.
" vi. Verſ. 4.) Knowing nothing but doting about
" Queſtions and Strifes of Words, whereof comes
" Envy, Conteſts, Railings, Evil Surmiſes, per-
" verſe Diſputings of Men of Corrupt Minds, and
" de-

" deſtitute of the Truth. *The like Expreſſions of the*
" *ſame Apoſtle we find*, 2 Tim. iii. Verſ. 7. &c. *But*
" *Catholicks (God be praiſed) have a more ſolid Foun-*
" *dation, whereon to eſtabliſh their Faith. And verily*
" *ſuppoſe I ſhould read all Proteſtant Books, and con-*
" *ſume all my Life in running from One learned Divine,*
" *one able Miniſter, one Meeting-Houſe, or Aſſembly,*
" *to Another, when, or where ſhould I find them (as I*
" *do Roman Catholicks, guided and guarded by the*
" *the Church, in the Matters of their Faith; however,*
" *they may differ in Problematical Opinions) all of One*
" *Mind, even in the moſt weighty Articles of Religion?*
" *(So varying, ſo wavering, ſo unſteady, are Proteſt-*
" *ants in their Principles.) Again: How ſhall I cer-*
" *tainly know this or that Miniſter, or Divine, is an*
" *Impartial Judge, and the Man of all Others diſſent-*
" *ing from him, only in the Right? How ſhall I under-*
" *ſtand all the* Hebrew *Texts*, Greek *Authors*, La-
" tin *Fathers, Numberleſs Quotations, Subtle Argu-*
" *ments, and Criticiſms he makes Uſe on, and perad-*
" *venture impoſes upon Me, to prove his Doctrine? I*
" *have neither Leiſure, nor Learning, throughly to ex-*
" *amine Them, and ſo pick an aſſured Truth from Falſ-*
" *hood, out of them. How perplexed and perilous to my*
" *Soul, are theſe Endleſs Searches? What needs ſuch a*
" *Labyrinth of Confuſion, about Religion, when the Pro-*
" *vidence of God (as I have already often ſaid) has*
" *eſtabliſh'd an Univerſal Viſible Guide (the Church)* in-
" ſpired by the Holy Ghoſt (Jo. xiv. Verſ. 26.) *On*
" *purpoſe to direct* aright, *all Perſons, whether Lear-*
" *ned or Unlearned, in all Goſpel-Truths reſpectively,*
" neceſſary to Salvation. That ſo (*as St.* Paul *ex-*
" *preſly teaches*, Eph. iv. Verſ. 13.) We may all
" Come in the Unity of Faith, and Knowledge of
" the Son of God, and from henceforth (Verſ. 14.)
" be no more Children toſſed too and fro, and car-
" ried

"ried about with Every wind of Doctrine, by the "Sleight of Men, and Cunning Craftineſs, where-"by They lie in Weight to deceive. *An admira-"ble Sentence, and deſerving your Attention.*

Here is again a Great Cry, and Nothing in it. The ſumm of all is the ſame that I have juſt now anſwer'd; He is ſure they are in the Right, and therefore have no need to look any farther: We are full of Differences, and He cannot tell on which Party among Us to fix. *So varying, ſo wavering, ſo unſteady are Proteſtants in their Principles, even in the moſt weighty Articles of Religion.*

Upon what weak Grounds the *Romaniſts* eſtabliſh their Own Confidence, I have already ſhewn. As for the Differences here charged upon the *Reformed*; I do once more Repeat, what I before ſaid, That conſidering them as they ought to be taken, (not in the Invidious Latitude, under which, Every one who Quarrels at the Errors of the *Church of Rome*, is a *Proteſtant*, be his *Opinions* otherwiſe what they will) they are ſo far from *differing* in the moſt weighty *Articles of Religion*, that, on the contrary, they are better agreed in Them, than the *Papiſts* themſelves, with all their boaſts of their *Unity*, and *Infallibility*, are. And if for Differences in Matters which concern not the *Foundation of Faith*, We are to be Condemn'd, how much more muſt They deſerve to fall under the ſame Cenſure, who pretending to a Certain, and Infallible Means, of Ending Controverſies, nevertheleſs continue to abound with them, to as Great, or even a Greater Degree, than any Other Church beſides in the World?

What that Paſſage of Scripture, with which he ſhuts up this Paragraph, and deſires ſuch ſpecial Notice may be taken of it, makes to his Purpoſe, I

cannot tell. St. *Paul*, ſpeaking to the *Epheſians*, of thoſe *Gifts* which Chriſt, at his Aſcenſion, beſtow'd upon the *Church*, tells them, *That he gave ſome Apoſtles, and ſome Prophets, and ſome Evangeliſts, and ſome Paſtors and Teachers: For the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Miniſtry, for the Edifying of the Body of Chriſt:* —— *Till we all Come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God to a Perfect man, unto the meaſure of the Stature of the fulneſs of Chriſt. That we henceforth be no more Children, toſſed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of Doctrine, by the ſleight of Men, and cunning Craftineſs whereby they lie in wait to deceive.* The meaning of which Paſſage is this, That the Ends for which Chriſt Inſtituted the Miniſtry of his *Church* were, *Firſt*, To *Help* Chriſtians in their Spiritual Growth, and to bring them up to the utmoſt degree of Perfection, both in *Faith*, and *Piety*, which every one is able in his ſeveral State, and Condition, to attain to. And, in the *Next* place, To keep them Firm and Stable in the *Faith*; that they be not ſtagger'd at every *New Doctrine* which they hear of; nor apt to be led away by every Cunning *Impoſtor*, who ſhall endeavour to make them *Proſelytes* to his *Party*.

This is the manifeſt Import of that Paſſage: And the natural Conſequence of it is this; which I think this Gentleman would do well (in his turn) to conſider: That ſince the End of the Miniſtry, and the Buſineſs, which Chriſt has call'd them to in the *Church*, is to build Men up in a *Right Faith*; and having done that, to Keep them Steady in it; and Eſpecially to Guard them againſt ſuch as ſhall Endeavour to *Seduce* them from it; It muſt be the Duty of Every Chriſtian who either wants a Farther Inſtruction in the *Right Faith*; Or is *Wavering*

in

in it; Or is *Endeavoured* to be *drawn away* from it; to apply himſelf to the Miniſters of his Church for *Help*, and *Information*; and not by neglecting ſo to do, yield himſelf up as an Eaſy Prey to Cunning, and Confident, *Deceivers.*

Let. P. 6.] "*Beſides, if I muſt firſt, with a Reſtleſs Inquietude, Read Proteſtant Books, Conſult Proteſtant Divines, and Examine well their Arguments to find whether their Doctrine be* Orthodox, *or* No, *before I become a* Roman Catholick; *Why muſt I not alſo with the ſame Exactneſs be converſant in the Writings, and Diſcourſes of* Deiſts, *and* Atheiſts, *and Examine well their* Tenents *to find, Whether the* Scripture *be God's Word or no? Whether there be a* Reveal'd-Religion *or no? Yes, Whether there be a* God *or no, before I remain a* Chriſtian? *Seeing all theſe Points, and many more, are of Equal Importance, often Controverted, and Require the like Methods of Attaining to the Knowledge of Them. What End can there be of theſe Redoubled Quarys? What danger even of* Atheiſm, Blaſphemy, *&c. am I Expoſed to Run into, by theſe, and the like Scrutinies?* It is written (*ſaith our Saviour*, Luk. iv. Ver. 12.) Thou ſhalt not tempt the Lord thy God. *But if I may rationally and ſafely Reſt without farther diſcuſſion and Enquiry in a Belief of the* Scriptures; *Of a* Reveal'd Religion; *Of a* God, *&c. upon the Teſtimony and Authority of the Univerſal Chriſtian Body of Mankind; Why may I not, in like manner, rationally and ſafely Reſt, without farther diſcuſſion and Enquiry, in a Belief of all other Articles, and Myſteries of Chriſtianity, upon the Teſtimony, and Authority of that Univerſal Body which is the* Church. "*Eſpecially if we duly Conſider this* Church, *not only as a Rational Atteſtant, but alſo as a Divinely Commiſſioned, and Aſſiſted Proponent of Faith. Nor can*

" *it Reasonably be Required, that every* Roman-Ca-
" tholick, *tho' firmly Believing all the Articles of his*
" *Faith, as proposed by the* Church, *should yet be able*
" *to Refute all Arguments, and Obviate all Objections,*
" *which the Wit, and Sophestry of Contentious Persons*
" *may invent to impugne Them. There is a vast dif-*
" *ference between knowing a Truth, and Vindicating*
" *the same Truth from all Opponents; these two often re-*
" *quiring different Mediums. A Man may be certain*
" *(for Example) from his very Eye-sight, and proper*
" *Experience, the* Sea *Ebbs and Flows, yet Peradventure*
" *cannot define, whether or no, this Motion of the* Sea
" *proceeds from the Course of the* Moon; *Nor give a Sa-*
" *tisfactory Answer to all Arguments and Objections*
" *that may be produced to shew the* Moon *can have no*
" *such Predominant Influence over that vast Element;*
" *A Solution of these Objections depending upon* Philoso-
" phy *and* Astronomy.

It is a severe Censure, that has been oftentimes passd upon Those of the Church of *Rome*, that to defend their Own *Errors*, they care not what Advantage they give to Sceptical Men, against our Common Christianity: As if they were Resolved rather to Renounce the One, than not to make it Subservient to the Other. I am sorry that this Gentleman has now, the second time, in this short Peice, given us Cause to think the Reflection to be but too just: By insinuating, as he does, that there is as good Ground for the Objections of *Deists*, and *Antiscripturists* against Christianity; nay, and even of *Atheists* themselves against the Being of a God, as in Ours against the Authority and Infallibility of their Church; And it were all one to deny Christ, and to doubt whether the *Pope* be his Vicar upon Earth.

How-

However; if ſuch be the Caſe of theſe Gentlemen, that they are in good Earneſt as much in doubt of the *Exiſtence* of *God*, of the *Truth* of Chriſtianity, and the *Divine* Inſpiration of the *Holy Scriptures*, as we are of the *Purity* of the *Romiſh* Faith; I do not ſee but that it will as much concern Them to ſtudy the Arguments of thoſe Profane Men, as it will Us to Examine their Pretenſions, before We ſuffer our ſelves to be deluded by Them. Nor can I find any thing in this Diſcourſe worthy a Reflection, but only the Impiety of the Compariſon; which, 'tis to be hoped, Our *New Convert* may Himſelf in time Conſider, and be aſham'd of.

As for the *Queſtion* which he asks, *Why he may not rationally and ſafely Reſt, without farther diſquiſition, and Enquiry, in a Belief of all the Articles and Myſteries of Chriſtianity, upon the Teſtimony, and Authority of that Univerſal Body which is the Church: Eſpecially conſidering, that this Church is not only a Rational Atteſtant, but a divinely Commiſſion'd and Aſſiſted* Proponent *of Faith*; I Anſwer, Becauſe, that if he means the Church of *Rome*, to be this *Church* (and that He does mean ſo, He cannot deny) that *Church* is no *ſuch Divinely Commiſſion'd, nor Aſſiſted Proponent of Faith* as He ſuppoſes her to be. Let him prove that, and he does ſomewhat. But to aſſert only, *What is the main thing in queſtion*, and he knows we Deny, is only to Convince Us the more Effectually, that he has nothing to ſay for it.

What he means by his laſt Reflection, I do not very well Underſtand. No body that I know of Requires that every Ordinary Chriſtian, of any Communion, ſhould be a thorough-pac'd *Divine*; and able to diſpute in Controverſies of *Faith* againſt All Opponents. Indeed We do not think it ſufficient for Mens Salvation, to Reſolve the whole Sub-

ſtance of their Chriſtian Belief into the One, ſingle, *Article* of the Churches *Infallibility:* And to Acquieſce in this, inſtead of all the Reſt of their *Creed*, That they *Believe as the Church Believes.* But for the reſt, We are ſenſible that God Requires no more of any Man, than he gives him Capacity, and Opportunity to Comprehend. Every One who Expects to be ſaved by the *Goſpel* of *Chriſt*, ought as well to Endeavour to Underſtand the Doctrine, as to Obſerve the Commands of it. But a Man may go to Heaven, tho he has not Read over Cardinal *Bellarmines* Controverſies; Nor is any more able to Defend the *Truths* of Chriſtianity, than this Author is to give a Reaſonable Account, wherefore he has Embraced the *Errors* of *Popery.*

But tho' this be the Caſe of ſuch Chriſtians as go on in the way in which Gods Providence has placed them, and have neither Ability, nor Opportunity of knowing better; Yet I dare not ſay the ſame of thoſe Men of Reaſon, who pretend to judge of *Churches*, and *Doctrines*; and by the help of a Faculty which, at the ſame time, they Decry, as of no Uſe, nor Certainty, in *Matters* of *Faith*; undertake to determine ſome of the moſt difficult Controverſies of *Religion.* He who goes off from one *Church* to *Another*, and Reſolves, upon *Mature Judgment*, and in Confidence of his Own *Skill*, and *Ability*, to Chooſe the Church of *Rome*, with all its Faults, for his *Miſtreſs* and *Guide*; and in Conſequence thereof Involves himſelf in all thoſe Grievous *Errors* from which the *Divine Providence* had ſet him Free; ought, I think, to be able to give ſome good Account both to God and the World, why he does ſo. If he does it with Care, and Diligence; with Piety and Impartiality; and tho' he be deciev'd in his Choice, has yet his Head ſo very odly turn'd, that

that he really thinks himſelf to be in the Right; I hope God will forgive his Change, tho' Raſh and Dangerous: But elſe, if he be eaſily Cheated and Fool'd out of his *Faith*; for want of a due Care in Examining things himſelf, and Applying to thoſe who would have taught him better; but much more, if he goes over to the Church of *Rome* for any Carnal, or Worldly Ends, or Intereſts; let him know aſſuredly, that how fairly ſoever he may carry it off to Men, he ſhall give a ſtrict Account to God for it.

Let. P. 7.] "*You will needs affirm, (and this in* "*very Paſſionate Terms) I am grown ſo Obſtinate, ſo* "*Wilful, ſo Bigotted, in the Superſtitions, Idolatries,* "*and Abominations of* Popery, *there is no Reclaim-* "*ing of me.* Sir, *I know of no Superſtitions, no Idola-* "*tries, no Abominations taught or allow'd of amongſt* "Roman-Catholicks; *thoſe Imaginary Enormities* "*being the meer Product and Iſſue of Miſ-informati-* "*on, Wrong Education, Scandal taken at Perſonal Miſ-* "*demeanours of Evil* Catholick *Livers*, &c. *in ſome* "*(as I believe in you.) And of Paſſion, Malice, In-* "*tereſt, and from thence Raiſed Forgeries, and Calum-* "*nies*, &c. *Of the Churches Adverſaries.*

Whether we have here again a true Hiſtory, or only a Continuation of the Fable before begun; I cannot but Own this Paſſage to have been contrived well enough for Their Advantage, and Our Scandal. It was an Obvious Objection, which every body would have fallen upon, againſt the Pretended *Authority*, and *Infallibility*, of the *Roman Church* (which he has been ſo Studiouſly Labouring to eſtabliſh) That that *Church* cannot be either *Infallible* in its ſelf, or fit to *Guide* Others, which is actually Guilty of ſuch *Superſtition*, and *Idolatry*, as Our Writers conſtantly charge upon Her. To

Remove this Difficulty, He here once for all declares, that all this is a great *Miſtake*; and proceeds either from *Miſ-information*, &c. as in the more honeſt ſort of *Proteſtants*; or elſe from *Paſſion*, *Malice*, *Intereſt*, *and from thence Raiſed Forgeries*, *and Calumnies*, as in the Reſt. This was a Right Turn, and Anſwers both his Ends at once: It frees his *Church* from *Blame*, and loads us with the Heavy Charge of *Calumniy*, and *Malice* againſt Her.

I will not deny, but that I am One of Thoſe, who Charge the *Church* of *Rome* both with *Superſtition*, and *Idolatry*. And I utterly diſclaim all pretence of *Ignorance*, or *Miſ-information* in the doing of it. No, I do it out of a full Conviction that the Charge is juſt: And let this *Advocate* come to particulars with me, and clear it of this *Scandalous Imputation* if He can.

I am ſure neither this *Gentleman*, nor any Other of the *Roman Church*, will dare to deny the Authority of their *Own publick Rituals*; and I deſire no Other Books, to make Good the Charge of *Superſtition* upon them. The *Exorciſing* of Salt and Water; The *Benediction* of *Incenſe*; of *Croſſes*; *Bells*; and *Churches*; The Conſecrating of *Agnus Dei's*, &c. The Bleſſing of their ſeveral Kinds of *Oyl*, for the *Catechumens*, for the *Infirm*; for *Chriſm*; Theſe and many more, as perform'd in the Church of *Rome*, we affirm to be *Superſtitions*. Let him take his Choice either to deny that they do theſe things; or to defend Them from the *Charge* which We lay againſt Them,

As for the *Idolatry* of the Church of *Rome*, it is ſo very Evident, as ſcarce to need a Proof. In ſhort therefore; They who *Invocate* Saints, Angels, and the Bleſſed Virgin, contrary to the Firſt *Commandment*; Who *Make*, and *Worſhip* Graven-Images

ges, in oppoſition to the *Second*; Who *Swear*, and *Make Vows*, by the *Creature*, as well as the *Creator*, contrary both to the *Firſt*, and *Third*; are guilty of *Idolatry:* But this the Church of *Rome* does: And therefore it is guily of *Idolatry*.

And where there is *Superſtition* and *Idolatry*, I need not ſay that there muſt needs be *Abomination* to. For both theſe are things which God *Hates*; And has Commanded Us to Avoid, as *Evill*, and *Abominable*.

Let. P. 7.] " *And as for Reclaiming of Me, (as you* " *term it) I Repeat again, what I ſaid before; There is* " *and will be, in all Ages, One Holy* Catholick-Church; " *by the Promiſes of Chriſt, Spotleſs and Uncorrupted* " *in her Belief and Worſhip: Do then but ſhew me this* " *Univerſal Spotleſs,* Church, *from the Communion of* " *which* Roman-Catholicks *had ſeperated, and to which* " *ſtill Extant, and Viſible, at the beginning of the Re-* " *formation;* Proteſtants *United Themſelves in thoſe* " *very Points, or Articles of Faith, wherein they deſer-* " *ted the* Roman; *And I ſhall be far from being ſo Ob-* " *ſtinate and Inflexible as you Complain of. But this be-* " *ing, as you cannot but know, altogether Impoſſible,* " *and indeed Abſur'd to pretend to; Why may you not,* " *(laying aſide your Groundleſs Zeal) permit me to Con-* " *tinue in that Quiet of Conſcience I now enjoy, in the* " *Faith and Communion of Gods Holy Church?*

That Chriſt ſhall always have a *Viſible* Church, Profeſſing the *Fundamentals* of *Chriſtianity*, and in them Retaining ſuch a meaſure of the *Right Faith* as ſhall ſuffice for the ſaving of all the Honeſt and Pious *Members* of it, We readily acknowledge. But that there ſhall always be a *Viſible* Church, *Spotleſs, and Uncorrupted* in *Faith*, and *Worſhip*, we utterly deny; and deſire this Gentleman to prove it if he can.

But

But if degrees of Compariſon may ſuffice, as without Queſtion they may, to prove *One Church* more *Pure* and *Uncorrupted* than *Another*; then we ſay that at the *time* of the *Reformation*, and ſo on to this Day, the Poor *Greek Church*, amidſt all its Other Diſadvantages, both then was, and ſtill is, a much more *Spotleſs*, and *Undefiled Church*, than the *Church* of *Rome*; and therefore has a much fairer Pretence to thoſe Privilidges which this Gentleman talks of, but that ſhe both underſtands *Her ſelf*,, and the *Goſpel of Chriſt*, too well, to pretend to them.

Let. p. 7.] "*But you ſtill Inſiſt and Say*; *God has* "*given me a Reaſon whereby to diſcern Truth from* "*Falſhood*; *Why ſhould I not have made Uſe of that* "*Reaſon, before I blindly turn'd from the Proteſtant, to* "*the* Roman Catholick *Religion? Sir, I did make* "*Uſe of the Reaſon God has given Me*; *and think my* "*Proceedings herein have been exactly Conform to that* "*Reaſon. For what can be more reaſonable than that* "*being Obliged by Almighty God under Penalty of Dam-* "*nation to give an Aſſent to All, and ſingular Divine* "*Revelations*; *And a right Knowledge of Theſe, ex-* "*ceeding my Natural Wit and Induſtry to Compaſs, I* "*ſhould ſubmit my Judgment to ſuch a Proponent or* "*Vice-gerent, as God himſelf, the Fountain of Truth,* "*had Commiſſioned and Authoriſed to Guide and In-* "*ſtruct me. This Vice-gerent of God on Earth, is the* "Holy Catholick Church. *Contrary-wiſe*; *it ſeems* "*to me, when duly weighed in the Balance of Impartial* "*Reaſon, direct Nonſence in any (eſpecially Inferiour* "*and Subordinate Parts or Members) to pretend in* "*Matters of Faith, to Reform an Un-reformable* "*Church.*

How well this Gentleman employed his *Reaſon*, in the change of his *Religion*, what hasbeen before ſaid may ſuffice to ſhew. But I muſt once more put

put him in mind, that himſelf has told Us, that *Private Reaſon* is a Facultie not to be *Truſted* in *Matters* of *Religion*. That no One, can ever be ſure that, in following the Conduct of it, He does not do Amiſs. And therefore it very Ill becomes ſuch a One to talk of following his *Reaſon* in changing his *Religion*, who profeſſes himſelf to have no *Opinion* at all of *Reaſon* in theſe Caſes: And in the ſame breath endeavour to perſwade Us to lay aſide our *Reaſon* altogether; and yet upon the ſole *Authority of Reaſon* to determine ſome of the moſt *Nice*, and intricate points of *Religion*; and upon which, if we will believe theſe Men, Our Whole *Hope* of *Salvation* depends.

He adds; *That it ſeems to him, when duly weighed in the Balance of Impartial Reaſon, to be direct Nonſence in any to pretend, in matters of Faith, to Reform an Unreformable Church.* He is in the Right: To *Reform* what is *Unreaſonable* is *Nonſence*. To *Reform* what needs not to be *Reform'd*, is a *Vain Preſumption*. And laſtly; To *Endeavour* to *Reform* ſuch a *Church*, as, tho' it very much needs it, yet is Reſolved it will not be *Reform'd*; a *fruitleſs Attempt*, and from which, there is little to be expected, but *Injuries*, and *Diſappointment*. This laſt I look upon to be the true Caſe of the *Church of Rome*: Which therefore I think ought to be left to the *Judgment* of *God*; Unleſs the *Quakers* ſhall think fit to Atttempt the *Converſion* of the *Body*, as They Once did of the *Head*, of it. 'Tis a *Work* very fit for them, who by the Help of their *Light within*, account themſelves as *Infallible* as either the Pope, or *Church of Rome*; and therefore are the moſt proper to deal with them on their *Own Terms*.

Let. p. 8.] "*And I farther Argue; in caſe you "ſhould Over perſwade me under the Notion of Reaſon to*

"*ſtifle*

" *Stifle and extinguish in my Self all Sense and Thought*
" *of submitting my Judgment to the Conduct of any One,*
" *Universal Church at all, in Explaining the Scriptures,*
" *Adjusting of Controversies, and asserting Matters of*
" *Faith, deposited in Her; I should then indeed be no*
" Roman Catholick, *but withal I profess I should hardly*
" *continue any longer a Christian. For the Testimony,*
" *and Authority of an Un-erring Church once removed,*
" *there remains to Me no Extern Evidence, or rational*
" *Motive of Credibility, whereon to Ground an Assurance*
" *requisite to Faith. And on this account, I think it is,*
" *we find so many Deists or Naturalists daily swarming*
" *and multiplying amongst the Wits of our Reformed Pro-*
" *testant Nation.*

I have already testify'd some kind of Fears, that those of the *Other Communion*, are so far engaged to the *Interests* of *Popery*, as to Resolve either to defend that, or to leave *Christianity* to fall with it. He has now given Us an Effectual Instance of it: For if there be no way left to prove the *Truth* of the *One*, but by the *Infallibility* of the *Other*, I doubt the *Cause* it *desperate*, and that many will *Resolve* not to be *Christians*, rather than to be such as they would have Us to be.

But God be thanked, we have Other ways of defending the *Truth* of the *Gospel*, than by the *Testimony*, or *Authority*, of that Proud, Corrupted *Church*. And as for the *Deists*, and *Naturalists*, which he speaks of, *daily swarming and multiplying amongst the Wits of Our Reformed Protestant Nation*; Give me leave to tell him I doubt we are to thank Them for the Greatest part of Them. When Men of *Wit* and *Sense* travel into *Popish* Countries, and there see with their Own Eyes the Follies, and Superstitions of that *Religion*: When they are entertain'd with their Pretences of Authority and Infallibility; and at the same time

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are fully and evidently convinced, that all this is only a trick, and deluſion, to amuſe the People, and keep them in Obedience: When they Converſe with the Learned Men of that Church, who ſmile at their Own Follies; and would take it as a Great Affront to be thought to approve of them, any more than we do: When they find all their boaſt of Sanctity and Devotion, ending at laſt in worldly Splendor, and Policy; and the Greateſt Members of their Communion without any more *Religion* than what appears in the *Croſs* and the *Purple*: When, laſtly, they perceive the Sincere and Pious among Them, Groaning under their Own *Corruptions*, and wiſhing, in Vain, for a Redreſs of them: I need not ſay what a dangerous Temptation this may afford to Men of *Wit* and *Senſe*, to look upon all *Religion* as equally a *Cheat*; and to Reflect on that Benediction, which a Certaln *Cardinal* once Gave to the Poor People who came out in Crowds to meet him, and Ask his *Bleſſing*; *Si populus vult decipi, decipiatur.*

Let. P. 8.] "*To Conclude my long Letter: I humly beſeech you to rectifie your Miſ-conceived Opinion,* "*and depoſe your Animoſity, againſt the* Roman-Ca- "tholick Religion: *Or at leaſt wiſe better to Examine* "*(as I have done) that Grand Article of your* Creed, "I Believe the Holy Catholick-Church? *What it is?* "*Wherein it conſiſts? What its Attributes? What* "*Promiſes annexed to it? What Obedience due to it?* "*Before (Relying on your Own Judgment, or the Cen-* "*ſure of Others, Govern'd by the ſame Exolick Prin-* "*ciples) you ſo Poſitively Contradict, and Condemn its* "*Doctrine. Thus (by Gods Bleſſing) you may happi-* "*ly Arrive at an Attonement with God, at Peace with-*

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" *ſtifle and extinguiſh in my Self all Senſe and Thought*
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" *teſtant Nation.*

I have already teſtify'd ſome kind of Fears, that thoſe of the *Other Communion*, are ſo far engaged to the *Intereſts* of *Popery*, as to Reſolve either to defend that, or to leave *Chriſtianity* to fall with it. He has now given Us an Effectual Inſtance of it: For if there be no way left to prove the *Truth* of the *One*, but by the *Infallibility* of the *Other*, I doubt the *Cauſe* it *deſperate*, and that many will *Reſolve* not to be *Chriſtians*, rather than to be ſuch as they would have Us to be.

But God be thanked, we have Other ways of defending the *Truth* of the *Goſpel*, than by the *Teſtimony*, or *Authority*, of that Proud, Corrupted *Church*. And as for the *Deiſts*, and *Naturaliſts*, which he ſpeaks of, *daily ſwarming and multiplying amongſt the Wits of Our Reformed Proteſtant Nation*; Give me leave to tell him I doubt we are to thank Them for the Greateſt part of Them. When Men of *Wit* and *Senſe* travel into *Popiſh* Countries, and there ſee with their Own Eyes the Follies, and Superſtitions of that *Religion*: When they are entertain'd with their Pretences of Authority and Infallibility; and at the ſame time

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"in your self, and consequently become Reconciled to me:
"All which is the daily Prayer of,

SIR,

Your dutiful, and Affectionate Nephew,
M. B.

We are now come to the Concluſion of all: And this Gentleman has unluckily fallen upon ſuch a One, as is but little to the Advantage of the *Roman Church*. No one who underſtands that Article of his *Creed*, The *Holy Catholick-Church*; and knows, *What it is? Wherein it Conſiſts? What its Attributes are? What the Promiſes annexed to it? What Obedience is due to it?* Can either believe the *Roman Church* to be the *Catholick*, or will be ſo Enſlaved to it, as he would perſwade Us, without all *Reaſon*, to be.

The *Catholick-Church*, ſpoken of in Our *Creed*, is the Univerſal *Church* of Chriſt; The *Church* of *Rome* is but a Part, and that one of the Worſt, and moſt Corrupted Parts, of it. The two Great Attributes of Chriſts *Church*, are *Holy*, and *Catholick*: The Church of *Rome* is no more the Former, than all the World ſees it not to be the Latter. The Promiſes of Chriſt to the *Catholick* Church are, Support againſt Outward Violence and decay, And Aſſiſtance in all Neceſſary Truth, which is Requiſite to the Continuance of it. The Church of *Rome* has no Promiſe of Either; but as in the buſineſs of its Doctrine, the *Tares* have almoſt utterly *Choaked* the good *Seed*; So for the Other, it is Probably Believed, (and Poſſibly a little time may yet ſhew the Effect of it) That that *Church* ſhall be Deſtroyed, not by the Power of Man, but by the *Arm* of *God*, *with the Spirit of his Mouth, and the brightneſs of his Comming*, 2 Theſs. ii. 8.

Laſtly,

Laſtly, To the *Catholick* Church, and to every particular Part, or Member of it, Obedience is due in all things relating to our Spiritual Conduct, within the bounds of Truth, Righteouſneſs, and Charity. But if any *Church* upon Earth ſhall require its Members to *Corrupt* the *Faith*, or to *Tranſgreſs* the *Commandments* of Chriſt; They are ſo far from being bound to Obey it, that, on the contrary, it is the duty of every Chriſtian, in theſe Caſes, to Obey God rather than Man. The Church of *Rome* Requires her Members, not only blindly to ſubmit in all things to her Conduct; but againſt Senſe, Reaſon, and even the Word of God its ſelf, to believe that to be True, which all theſe ſhew us to be Falſe.

To cloſe up all: The *Scriptures* I know to be *Divine* and *Infallible*. That theſe do in many things Contradict the Definitions of the Preſent *Roman* Church, I am as ſure, as I can be of any thing. If upon ſuch an Aſſurance, I may be permitted to Judge for my ſelf, I muſt then Conclude, That the Church of *Rome* has Erred, and Departed from the Truth of the Goſpel. If I may not; There is then no poſſible way left for me to be convinced, by *Reaſon*, That that *Church* is Infallible; and has a Right to my Subjection. And therefore I muſt be Content to Continue as I am, till they ſhall be able, by ſome Supernatural Evidence, to prove that I am in a wrong way; and that by going Over to Them, I ſhall change for the Better.

F I N I S.

ERRATA.

PAge 2. line 3. dele *rites*. p. 9. l. 13. r. *those*. p. 39. l. penult. r. *Church*. p. 40. l. 22. r. *except*. l. 24. r. *Unanimously*. p. 45. l. 12. r. *Defrinct*. p. 47. l. 34. r. *Regarded*. p. 48. l. 28. r. *its*.

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